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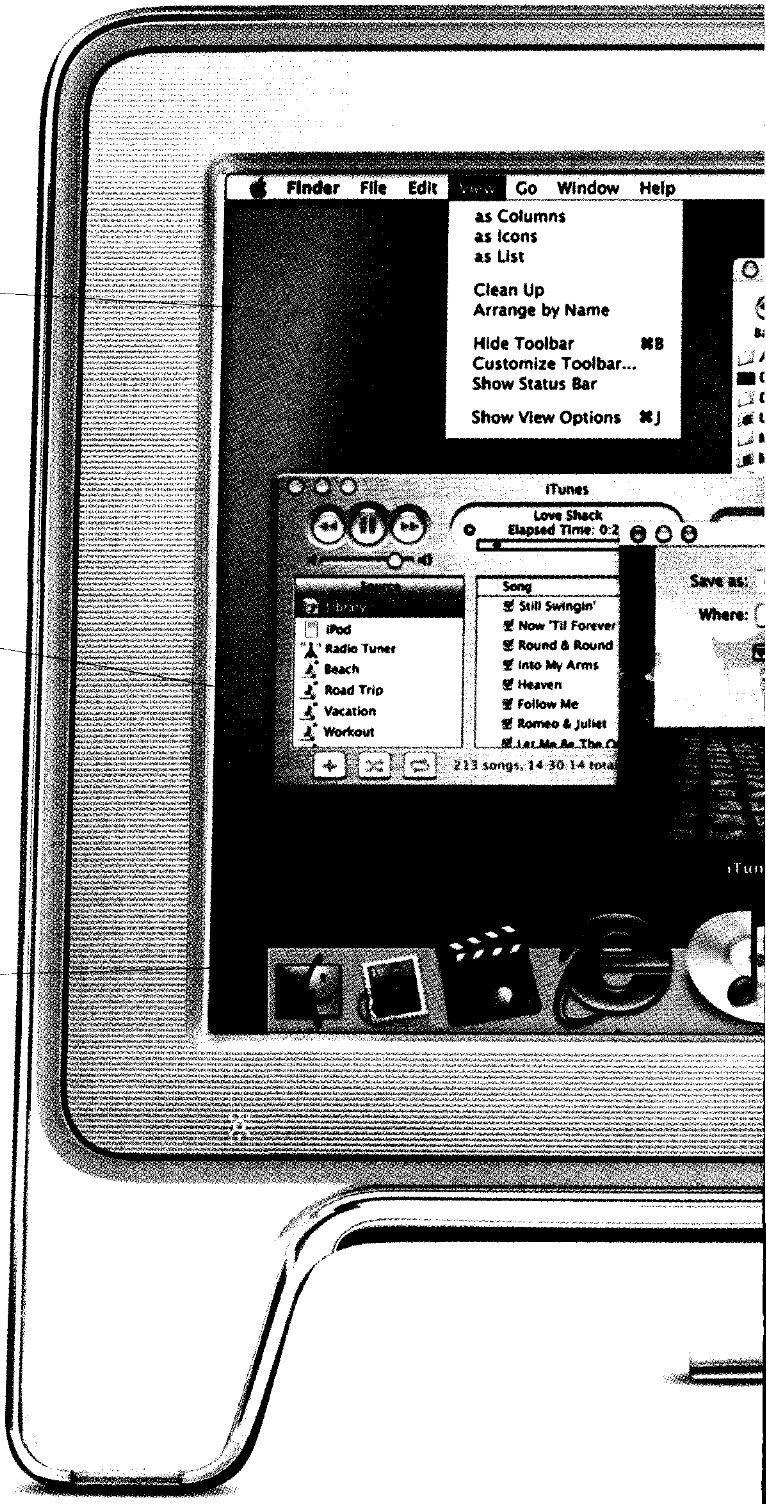
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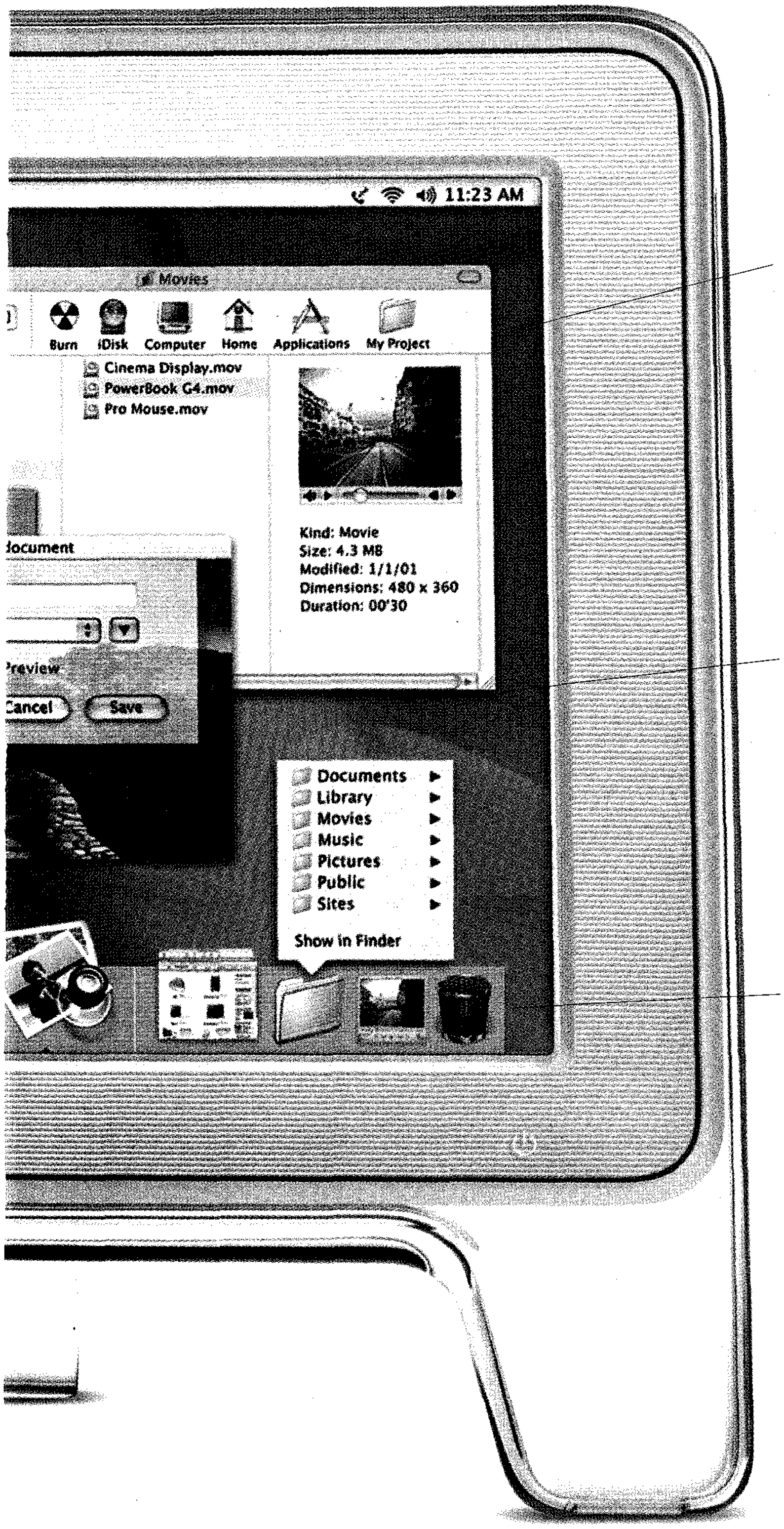
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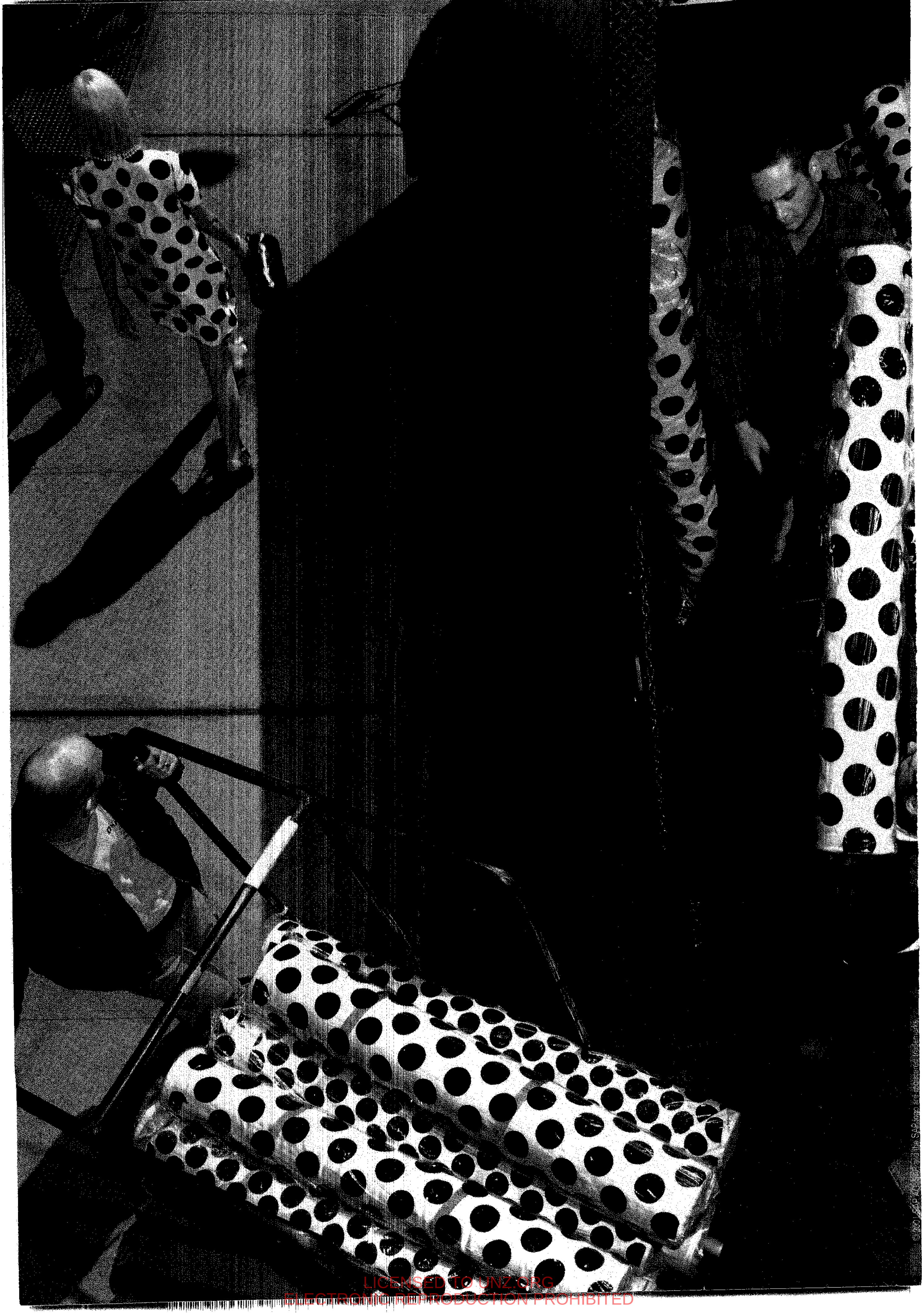

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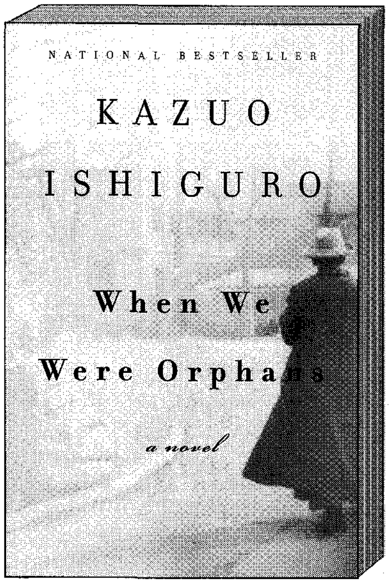

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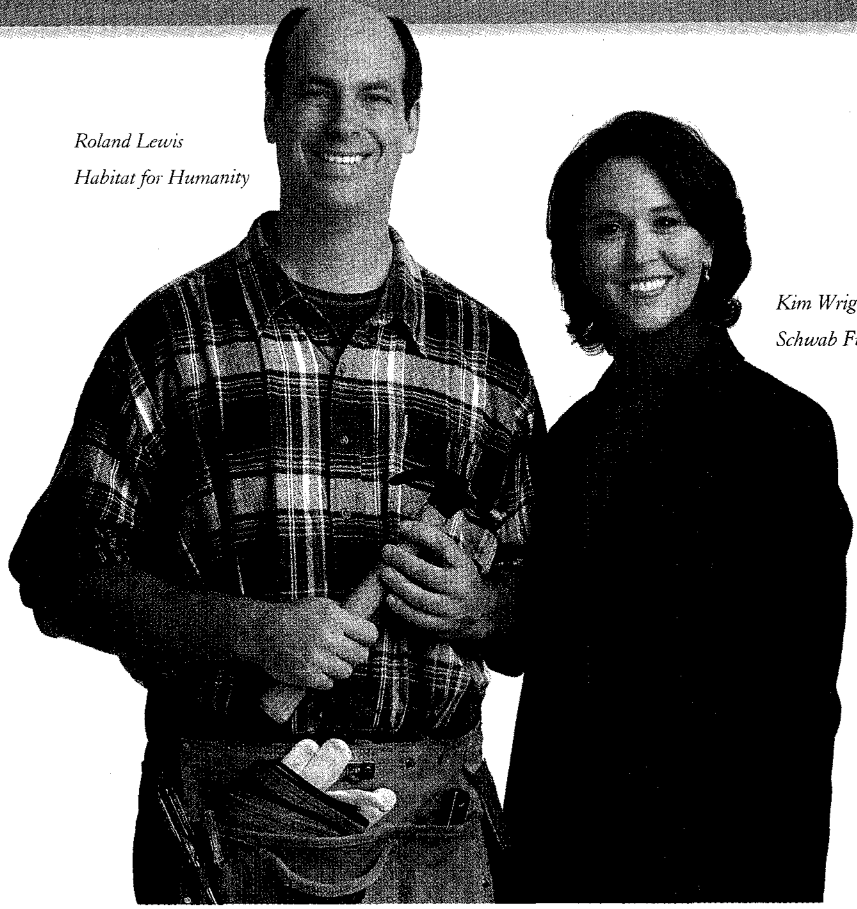

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Peter J. Boyer ("The Worrier," p. 48) is a regular contributor. His piece "Bad Cops" has been selected for the Best American Crime Reporting anthology, which will be published in May, 2002.

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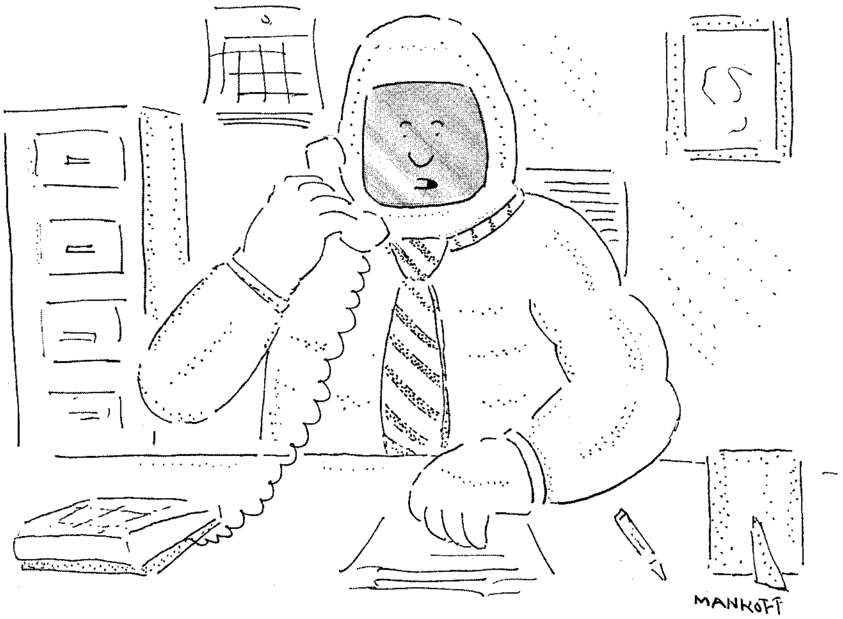

"Oh, you know, same old same old."

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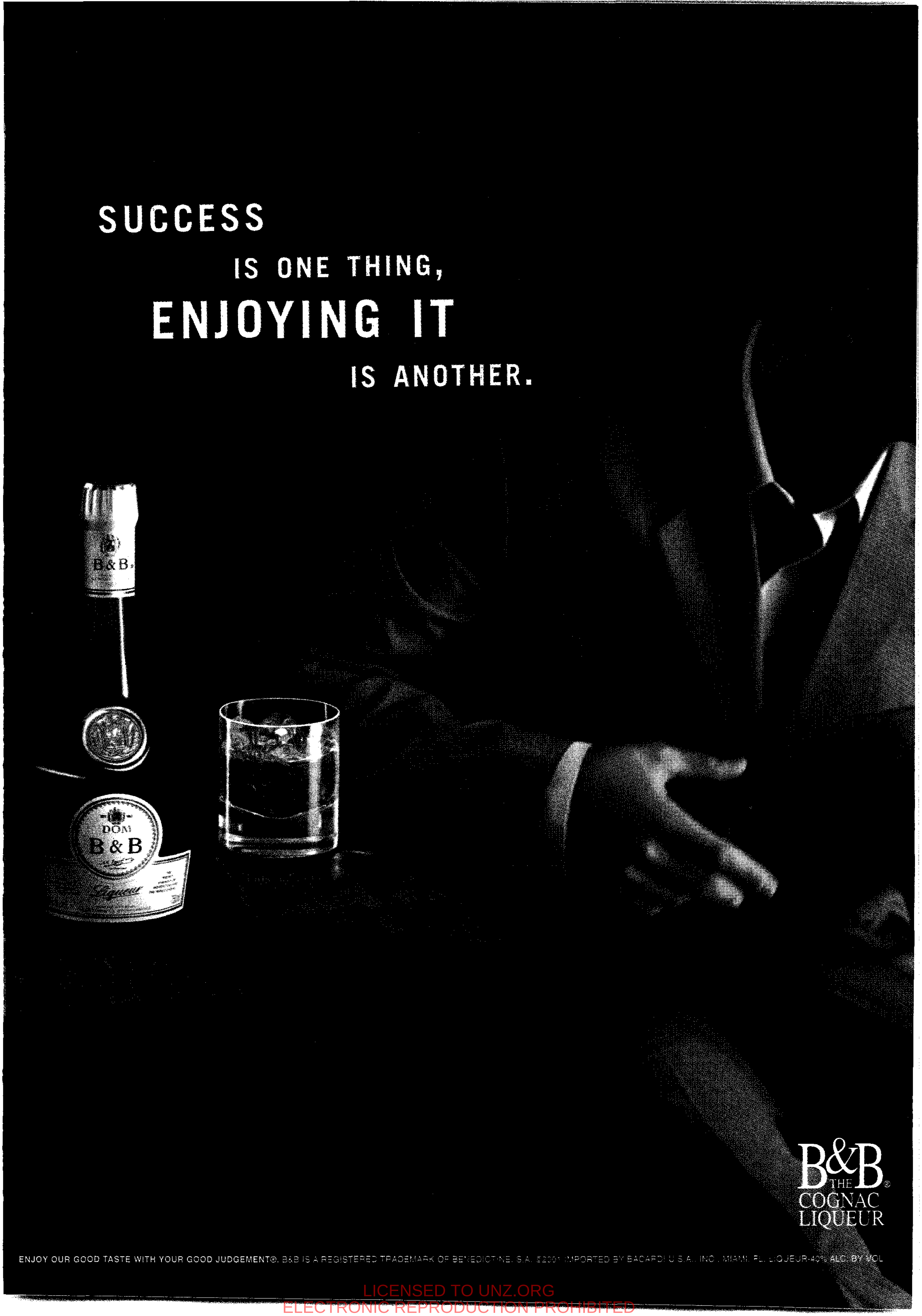
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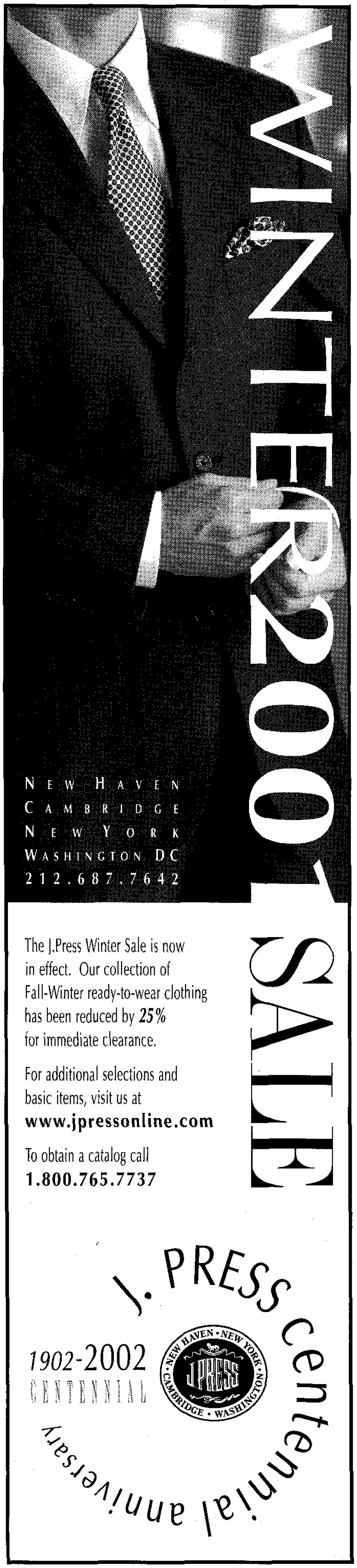

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PAKISTAN'S BOMBS

Seymour M. Hersh's concern about nuclear issues in South Asia merits respect ("Watching the Warheads," November 5th). However, the unnamed American officials he cites, who express doubts about Pakistan's ability to keep control of its nuclear assets, seem unaware of what we have accomplished. In the past two years, Pakistan has implemented strong command-and-control measures to guarantee foolproof nuclear security. Safe custody is insured by dedicated formations of specially equipped forces, which have been set up for each of the three armed services. Stringent procedures are in place to minimize risks of accidental or unauthorized launch. The United States has expressed confidence in the steps we have taken; we have never had an incident of theft or of leakage of nuclear material, equipment, or technology from military or civilian research facilities.

Much of the credit is due to our armed forces, who are—despite Hersh's portrayal of them as discontented—professional, disciplined, and institutionally strong. Any apprehension that strategic assets might fall into the hands of extremists is imaginary—a product partly of television images that magnify the sights and sounds of protesters who represent a fringe, and by no means a cross-section, of our population. It is wrong to interpret feelings of sympathy for the Afghan people—with whom we share affinities of history and culture, and some of whom have been the innocent victims of stray bombs—as a danger to the government. The vast majority of the people support the state: moderate and rational, they understand that our policy is founded on principles of law and world consensus, and that it serves the national interest of Pakistan.

Abdul Sattar, Foreign Minister
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Islamabad, Pakistan

Hersh describes the very dangerous combination of Pakistani protests against General Pervez Musharraf's support of the American military campaign in Afghanistan, hostilities between Pakistan and India in Kashmir, and Pakistan's insecure nuclear arsenal. The United States, his story suggests, is acting with scant regard to the dangerous chain reaction it could trigger in the region. This should come as little surprise to observers of American foreign policy, which is too often conducted with little knowledge of, or regard for, far-off countries and their security concerns. The "collateral damage" of this approach, however, can include not only civilians accidentally caught by bombs but also the stability of entire regions. In this case, the potential damage—a possible nuclear war involving approximately a fifth of the world's total population—has the possibility of far overshadowing any objectives the United States might hope to achieve.

Ashwini K. Chhabra
New York City

There may well be reason to worry about the security of Pakistani nuclear weapons, but it is irresponsible for Hersh to report that the United States is putting together a special team that may be deployed to take control of the warheads in case Musharraf falls—and that it is getting help from Israel. For ordinary people in Pakistan, this story will serve to validate the message that religious leaders have been propagating about the dishonesty of American intentions. Many Pakistanis already believe that the United States' goal is to take away Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and not to fight terrorism. When the Pakistanis do take to the streets against their government, they will do so not by the thousands but by the millions. Articles like Hersh's will only make that more likely.

Pir A. Shah
Overland Park, Kans.

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KIKI & HERB: THERE'S A STRANGER IN THE MANGER!
Just in time for the holidays, a fresh dose of cabaret satire from the duo otherwise known as Justin Bond and Kenny Mellman. In previews. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 307-4100.)

LITTLE HAM
A musical based on the Langston Hughes play, which is set in 1936 Harlem. With music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Richard Engquist and Mr. Woldin, and a book by Dan Owens. In previews. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 563-2565.)

MARC SALEM'S MIND GAMES, TOO
The "mentalist and mind artist" returns to New York with more experiments in nonverbal communication. In previews. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

PETER PAN
The Irondale Ensemble Project's staging of J. M. Barrie's dramatic fantasy, under the direction of Jim Niesen, focusses on the play's original darkness. In previews through Nov. 25. Opens Nov. 27 at 8. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 718-488-9233.)

POETRY
Lou Reed (book, music, and lyrics) and Robert Wilson (direction and design) have teamed up with Hamburg's Thalia Theatre for a musical inspired by the life and work of Edgar Allan Poe. Nov. 27 at 7:30. Continues through Dec. 8. Performances are in German and English with English surtitles. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100.)

ROADSIDE
From the York Theatre Company, Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt's new musical, set in a travelling tent show in the Old West. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

SEXAHOLIX . . . A LOVE STORY
John Leguizamo's new solo show. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AN ADULT EVENING OF SHEL SILVERSTEIN
Ten comic sketches by the late Shel Silverstein. The production is polished: six charming actors are directed with pizzazz and precision by Karen Kohlhaas. But Silverstein's writing only lives up to them about half the time. The undated sketches seem as if they were written quite a while ago, and several have aged into dull irrelevance—yuppies beating up an elderly hippie for inventing "Have a nice day," for example. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Nov. 25.)

AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES
Rinde Eckert stars in an encore staging of his two-character musical-theatre work, in which a composer struggles to finish an opera based on "Moby-Dick" before he succumbs to a degenerative disease. (45 Bleecker Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 253-9983.)

BY JEEVES
There's no stopping the unrelenting bonhomie of this lame amusement by Alan Ayckbourn and Andrew Lloyd Webber, in which P. G. Wodehouse's shambolic Bertie Wooster (John Scherer) and his ingenious, haughty factotum, Jeeves (well played by Martin Jarvis), take the stage. Wodehouse's comic world is peopled by the stick figures of privilege—chinless wonders, blowhard judges, daft flappers, philistines who go by such nicknames as Bingo, Stinker, and Stiffy. Here, his artificial merry-go-round is topped by a theatrical artificiality whose sight gags—pantomime cows, dancing trees, collapsing chairs, a cardboard car, a yellow ball for a moon—huff and puff in an attempt to stir some ripples of surprise on the still water of the story. Andrew Lloyd Webber's melodies are generic, and Alan Ayckbourn, who, as the director, works manfully to whip a little fun into this listless tale, is less persuasive as a lyricist. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/12/01.) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

CHRISTMAS WITH THE CRAWFORDS
Joey Arias portrays Joan Crawford, in an encore staging of the Artfull Circle Theatre's drag satire. (Chelsea Playhouse, 125 W. 22nd St. 439-5135.)

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
A revival of Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield's comedy, in which three actors perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

DANCE OF DEATH
As a couple about to celebrate—if that's the right word—their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, Helen Mirren and Ian McKellen square off in Strindberg's depiction of the blasted heath of matrimony, and they do battle magnificently. Mirren, playing a former actress (if there is such a thing as a former actress), is droll and wicked, and McKellen, in his deep embrace of the role of an army captain who comes face to face with his own mortality, is a life force. Directed by Sean Mathias. (10/22/01) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
The Broadway star sings songs and tells tales about her life in the theatre, in a one-woman show co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr. George Wolfe is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

EVERETT BEEKIN
Bebe Neuwirth and Robin Bartlett lead the cast in Richard Greenberg's new play, which traces the history of a Jewish family through four generations, from New York to California. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

FERDYDURKE
Poland's Teatr Provisorium & Kompania Teatr performs a stage adaptation of the playwright Witold Gombrowicz's formerly banned 1937 surrealist novel. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. For schedule information about English and Polish performances, call 475-7710. Closes Nov. 25.)

45 SECONDS FROM BROADWAY
Neil Simon's new comedy. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

THE GLORY OF LIVING
Philip Seymour Hoffman directs a new drama by Chicago playwright Rebecca Gilman, which examines domestic violence. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 206-1515.)

HAVANA IS WAITING
Eduardo Machado's semiautobiographical play opens as Federico (Bruce MacVittie), a writer and teacher, dreams of returning to his mother—and to mother Cuba. He's awakened by his friend Fred (Ed Vassallo), who's come to accompany Federico on his first trip back to his homeland since he flew away, like a Lost Boy from "Peter Pan," thirty-eight years before. Machado makes poetic use of his three characters to explore the subjects of politics, resentment, class, regret, sexual identity, and forgiveness. Directed by Michael John Garcés, the actors are fine, but the main plot point—will Federico be permitted to enter the house he lived in as a child?—isn't much to hang a play on, and the over-all tone veers uncomfortably between the stridency of conflict and the emotionality of reconciliation. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

HEDDA GABLER
This "Hedda," starring Kate Burton and directed by Nicholas Martin, is all surface brightness—it twinkles rather than burns. Jon Robin Baitz's colloquial adaptation of Ibsen's drama leaves little room for

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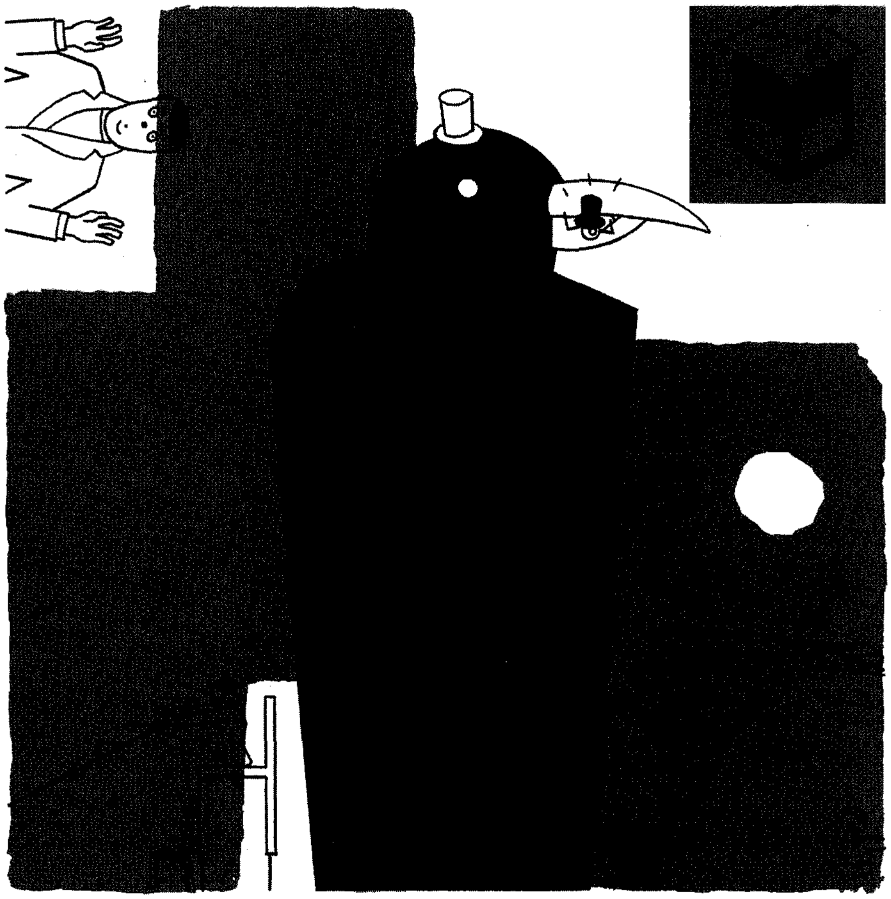
shading or depth, and the entire cast suffers under Nicholas Martin's heavy-handed and misguided direction, as does the audience. (10/22/01) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

IPHIGENEIA AT AULIS
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Euripides' tragedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

MAMMA MIA!
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Andersson and Ulvaeus have shrewdly allowed their platinum hits to be sent up by a story that pits the impudence of youth against the resilience of middle age. Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon that connects the dots between ABBA's No. 1 singles, asks the question: Can twenty-year-old Sophie, the daughter of a hippie dropout who was the leader of a girl group called Donna and the Dynamos, find out which of the three men she's invited to her wedding is her real father? Though the show is cunningly directed by Phyllida Lloyd and given the proper vulgar acrylic touch by the designer Mark Thompson, the question—a multi-million-dollar McGuffin—remains unanswered. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)



Lou Reed and Robert Wilson's "POEtry," at BAM.

LAURENT CILLUFO

METAMORPHOSES
Ovid said, "All things change, nothing perishes," and Mary Zimmerman's fluid and beautiful interpretation of several legends from his fifteen-book history of the world is reassuring proof. Her modern staging, which charmingly and wittily incorporates colloquial language and costumes that range across time, confirms the enduring and elemental power of myth. Here—on a stark set composed only of a large crystal chandelier, a battered manorial door, a suspended image of sky and clouds, and an oblong, twenty-seven-foot pool—real love, thwarted, begets love in other forms; kindness is rewarded in unexpected ways; and evil often backfires. But sometimes the good are punished and the bad triumph, because even the gods in charge surrender to flawed human emotion. A tonic for anyone who needs to believe that terrible events can transform us. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
It's gimmick Shakespeare, and it really works. The accomplished Aquila Theatre Company has set the Bard's comic examination of trust, mistrust, and sharp-tongued singles destined for couplehood in London in an "Avengers"-influenced swinging sixties. The story is advanced with the help of some go-go choreography, and "Hey Nonny Nonny" sung to a bossa-nova beat is just plain cool. What is not at all tricked up is the language, which is beautifully spoken, dramatically revealing, and crystalline in effect. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200.)

NOISES OFF
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," every member of the excellent cast—Patti LuPone, Peter Gallagher, Richard Easton, Faith Prince, Edward Hibbert, Katie Finneran, T. R. Knight, Thomas McCarthy, and Robin Weigert—shines in roles that lesser comedians would surely find daunting. Frayn's construction requires spot-on comic timing, and with the help of the director Jeremy Sams, this production delivers it—and then some. The laughs rumble through the audience from start to finish. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
It's one thing for a man to develop the ability to stretch his scrotum until it's the size of a dinner plate, but another to share this talent with the world. These two Australians, Simon Morley and David (Friendy) Friend, call their transformations "installations" and give them such suggestive names as "Kentucky Fried Chicken," "The Windsurfer," and "A Slowly Emerging Mollusk." It's all supposed to be good, clean, nasty fun; the Aussies even profess embarrassment at the success of their "little pub show." Still, it's a con: fifteen minutes into their act they are utterly naked and out of ideas. They can't go on, but they do. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

QED
A play by Peter Parnell, starring Alan Alda. Sundays and Mondays only. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE
The performance artist Reno, in her latest show. Mondays at 8. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

THE SHAPE OF THINGS
Gretchen Mol, Paul Rudd, Rachel Weisz, and Frederick Weller are in the cast of the Almeida Theatre Company staging of Neil LaBute's latest play. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

SHINY HOT NIGHTS: MORE SONGS OF JONI MITCHELL
The performance artist John Kelly stars in a follow-up to his 1997 one-man paean to the singer. Saturdays at 8. (Fez, 380 Lafayette St. 533-2680.)

[SIC]
Soho Rep kicks off the season with a comedy by Melissa James Gibson about a trio of aging prodigies. (46 Walker St. 479-7979.)

SPEAKING IN TONGUES
A new play by Andrew Bovell (who co-wrote the film "Strictly Ballroom"), which is described as a "psychological thriller, murder mystery, and partner-swapping satire." Karen Allen and Kevin Anderson lead the cast. Mark Clements is the director. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

THOU SHALT NOT
The psychological thriller "Thérèse Raquin" was Émile Zola's first experiment in naturalism; this ambitious musical retelling of the novel, by Susan Stroman (the director and choreographer), David Thompson (who wrote the book), and Harry Connick, Jr. (who wrote the music), is an experiment in Expressionism. Stroman wants dance to be the narrative engine of the musical, but it seems inadequate to the brooding psychology of Zola's lovers, Laurent (the strapping and charismatic Craig Bierko) and Thérèse (Kate Levering). The show never faces the moral horror of its origins, and it refuses to embrace Zola's notion that sexual pleasure leads to brutality and destruction. At final count, we have one drowning, one stroke, one gang rape, and two suicides in a show that concludes with a ghost swinging from a lamppost marked "Bourbon" and "St. Peter." What Zola imagined as the heart's wilderness Stroman and her team re-create as a theme park of self-destruction. (11/5/01) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!
The title represents the late author Jonathan Larson's fear of time running out on his musical dreams. The show is set on the eve of the composer's thirtieth birthday—his Walpurgisnacht—as he is caught between the pressures to succeed and to settle. The slick, hardworking cast of three is well directed by Scott Schwartz, and, with Larson's plotline deftly reworked by David Auburn, the production has a fetching modesty and reveals Larson's idiosyncrasy, energy, and promise. (7/9/01) (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

TINTYPES
A revival of the 1981 musical, from the Melting Pot Theatre Company. (McGinn Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
This one-man show, written by Glen Berger and performed by T. Ryder Smith, manages to be both a funny tale of a Dutch librarian's midlife crisis and a serious, intriguing look at the value of any one life. After a book is returned to the library a hundred and thirteen years overdue, the librarian becomes obsessed with finding out how and why. He eventually comes to believe that the Wandering Jew was the errant borrower, whose late return of the volume is one of a series of clues he's left in a desperate attempt to document his existence. Whether the audience buys this or not is irrelevant—it's the power of the librarian's belief that

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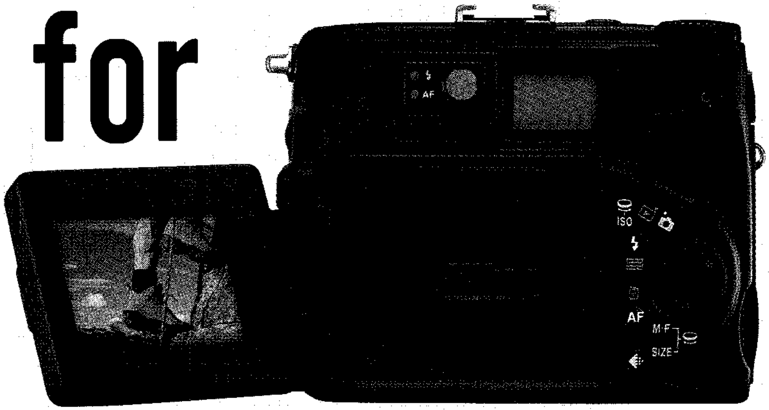
The status quo is left tired, bewildered and searching for answers.



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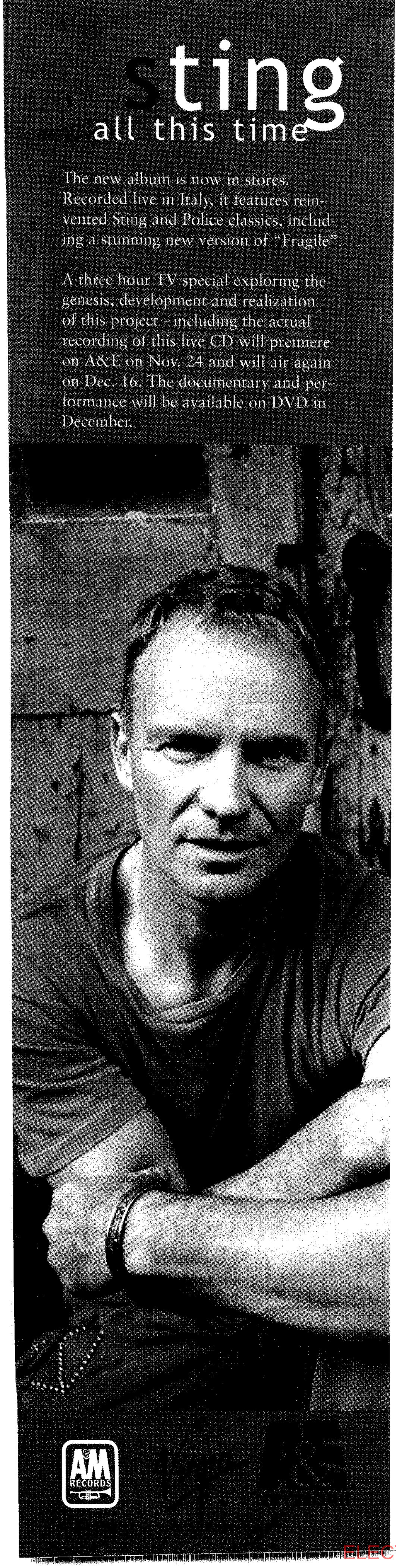
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A&M RECORDS

he can create a meaningful whole out of a few bits of ephemera that's being explored. Either way, the play is certainly, as billed, "An Impressive Presentation of Lovely Evidences." Directed by Randy White. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

URINETOWN
The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but you don't have to rack your brains about the ramifications of that any more than the authors did; the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon (not only does a sign saying "Secret Hideout" hang above a secret hideout; the sign has an arrow on it). John Cullum, Jeff McCarthy, Nancy Opel, and Spencer Kayden lead the uniformly wonderful cast, which is under the direction of John Rando, and John Carrafa is responsible for the clever musical staging. (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

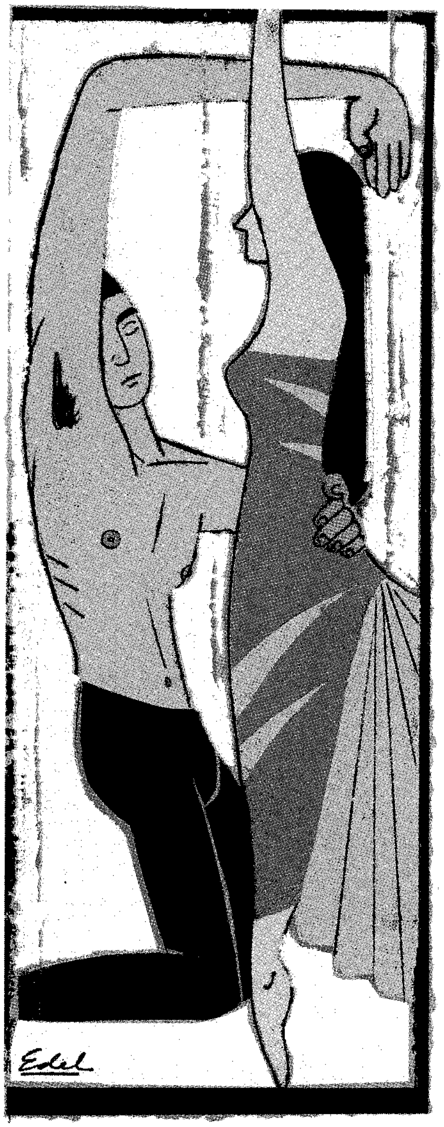
WHERE'S MY MONEY?
John Patrick Shanley's dark comedy about two bush-league divorce lawyers from Brooklyn. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE WOMEN
Scott Elliott directs a cast that includes Kristen Johnston, Rue McClanahan, Cynthia Nixon, Jennifer Tilly, Mary Louise Wilson, and Jennifer Coolidge, in Clare Boothe Luce's 1936 satire. With costumes by Isaac Mizrahi. (11/19/01) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

WONDER OF THE WORLD
A farcical saga of a manic faux-naïve chatterbox, Cass (the fetching and excellent Sarah Jessica Parker), who goes to Niagara Falls in search of a new life after leaving her husband of seven years, Kip (Alan Tudyk). The playwright David Lindsay-Abaire's soi-disant wacky humor offers no revelations, no admissions, no questions, only startling juxtapositions. He sets up a comic equation that he resolutely refuses to factor out, paints his characters into fantastical narrative corners, then extricates them via some implausibility that shocks the audience without enlightening it. The show's one incidental delight is the touching Kevin Chamberlin, who, as Captain Mike, the Niagara tourboat guide who falls for Cass, brings a palpable sweetness and a welcome complexity to the otherwise aimless comic playing. (11/12/01) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Nov. 20 at 7:30: Opening-night gala. ♦ Nov. 23 at 8, Nov. 24 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 25 at 1 and 5: Performances of "The Nutcracker" begin. Near the end of the variations for Spanish Hot Chocolate, Arabian Coffee, Chinese Tea, Marzipan, and Candy Canes, in the Balanchine ballet's second act, the Sugar Plum Fairy, the hostess of the Land of Sweets, arrives with her cavalier as the Tchaikovsky score rises to its grandest peak. In a coaching session for the fairy part, the former City Ballet principal Merrill Ashley told the current City Ballet soloist Janie Taylor, "When you come out, you're about to offer a dance. Take in the whole room." Taylor, who just turned twenty-one, moves with a feline spring and sudden, luxurious expansiveness, and she usually does take over a room—but like a queen of cats, not like what she calls (yearningly) "a perfect, beautiful, nice fairy." The rest of us may not be able to tell the difference, given Taylor's gift for bringing out the music in her steps. "It kind of fills you up," she says. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. "The Nutcracker" continues through Dec. 31.)



Limón Dance Company, at the Joyce.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

"AEROBIA"
The experimental playwright Jim Neu and the postmodern choreographer Douglas Dunn transport us to a fitness center fifteen years in the future where talking is part of the program: Aerobia is a self-help spa in which the clients work out concepts like "macrovision" and "aerobability." But the most forward-looking thing here is the two veterans' take on dance-theatre, an often tiresome form. This witty dance-play leaps over such common pitfalls as a too-literal connection between the talk and the dance or, alternately, a too-distant relation. It offers, instead, what Dunn calls "gentle, suggestive correspondences" between smart talk and quicksilver dancing. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 22-25 at 8:30.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
Half a century ago, when José Limón made "The Moor's Pavane" and his mentor, Doris Humphrey, created "Invention," gravity evidently had more pull, and torsos were taut with breath and resolve. In Humphrey's simple, strong trio, revived this week for the first time since the fifties, the man and the two women stretch their arms to the floor and turn their palms outward as if offering baskets of air: "Invention" makes it look that essential. A new work and a revival by Murray Louis, a Doug Varone duet for himself and the longtime Limón company member Nina Watt, and "The Moor's Pavane," Limón's signature work, are also featured, on two distinct programs. "Invention" appears on both programs. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 20-22 at 8, Nov. 23-24 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 25 at 2 and 7:30.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

QUEENSRŸCHE
Some may consider their brand of "progressive" metal to be dated, but Seattle's Queensrÿche still carry the torch for histrionic bombast, with a sound that aspires to evoke Pink Floyd and Queen. That their cult following has stuck with them all these years later suggests they might actually be pulling it off. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 21 at 8.)

"TRANCEGIVING"
The English turntable mastermind and producer Paul Oakenfold, who recently lent his talents to the soundtrack for the film "Swordfish," returns to the Hammerstein Ballroom for his annual Thanksgiving show. (Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Nov. 22 at 10.)

JORMA KAUKONEN AND JACK CASADY
The Hot Tuna guitarist and bassist reunite for an evening of acoustic blues and rock and roll. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 23 at 8.)

MOE.
One of the avatars of the jam-band scene, this ten-year-old quintet from upstate New York has made quite a name for itself by relying on a heavy touring schedule and an unexpectedly humor-

TABLES FOR TWO

BAHAR
984 Coney Island Ave., Brooklyn (718-434-8088)—Another American flag has gone up on this stretch of Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn's biggest Pakistani neighborhood, and at this scruffy storefront, the neon Afghan Kebab House sign has been taken down. Business isn't so hot lately, but the Russian, Mexican, and Indonesian staff remains upbeat. On a recent night one of the Afghan owners swaggered around in sweats and a backward baseball cap, chatting up women in head scarves waiting for their to-go orders.

The room is full of the expected tchotchkes (brass platters, musical instruments, ceremonial swords); what's not expected is how good the food turns out to be. *Ashak* (scallion dumplings) in a yogurt sauce with mint, tomato, and onion, and *bolani kadu* (mashed-pumpkin turnovers) with flaky fried pastry shells are the addictive appetizers. *Maste o khayr* is a tangy yogurt-cucumber salad that goes well with, and on, everything.

There are eighteen kebab options, grilled over hardwood charcoal in a large pit at the back of the restaurant. From the tandoori cod to the saffron-marinated filet mignon, they're perfectly tender but a little austere; they come to life with the hot green and red chutneys. This is the place to be if you love lamb, an Afghan favorite, which comes in so many variations that the dishes are hard to distinguish from one another—one incorporates okra, another more onions. In most of the rice specialties, a giant chunk of lamb shank is hidden in the brown basmati. The "Authentic Afghan Pasta Dishes" are homemade flat noodles with yogurt sauces that include delicious combinations of garlic, mint, butter, onion, and tomato, topped with kidney beans, beef, or shrimp. There's also a list of vegetarian entrées, heavy on eggplant and cauliflower.

No alcohol is served, and though patrons are invited to bring their own you might feel a little self-conscious when you uncork your zinfandel surrounded by the locals drinking green tea and salted yogurt shakes. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $6-$17.)

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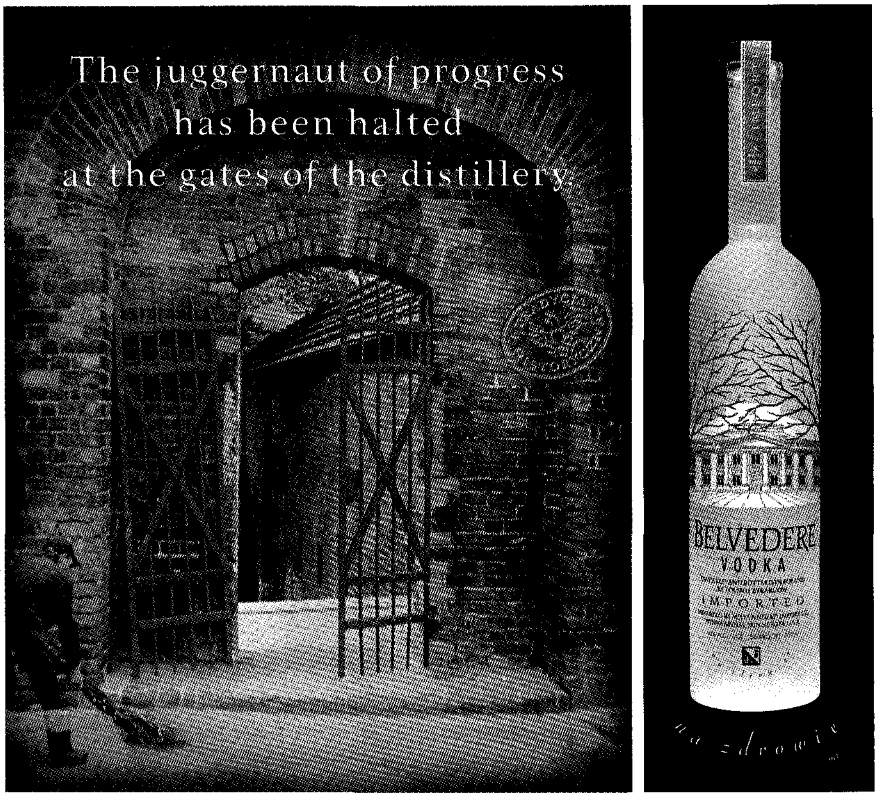

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ous sense of musical adventure. Even after a failed romance with a major label, Moe. remains unstoppable. (Hammerstein Ballroom. Nov. 23-24 at 8.)

ARLO GUTHRIE
Times change. This year Woody's son returns with a full symphony orchestra, led by John Nardolillo, for the annual rendition of his counterculture anthem about a draft-eligible folksinger getting arrested in Housatonic, Massachusetts. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 24 at 8.)

IBRAHIM FERRER
The Buena Vista Social Club veteran, who has been called the "Nat (King) Cole of Cuba," and his orchestra. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 24 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Nov. 22: **Pinetop Perkins,** the eighty-eight-year-old pianist and veteran of Muddy Waters' band, has yet to slow down. Nov. 23: The New York City native and eight-time All-Ireland champion fiddler **Eileen Ivers.** Nov. 23: Members of the jam band Moe. gather under the name **Ha Ha the Moose** after their show at the Hammerstein Ballroom. Nov. 24: A night of reggae with Bob Marley's old backing band, the **Wailers.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Nov. 23-24: The prototype of uncompromising American indie rock, North Carolina's **Superchunk** could have made as big a splash as Nirvana in the early nineties, but they firmly shunned all major-label offers. Their latest studio album released on their own Merge label, "Here's to Shutting Up," may offer a more gentle incarnation of the band, but their resolve remains as steely as ever.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 23-24: The flagship band of the manic guitarist Vernon Reid's Black Rock Coalition, **Living Colour** flattened genre fences and racial stereotypes in 1988 with their first album "Vivid," which showcased a heavily metallic and funk-laden but still widely accessible sound. Later albums failed to match their début's impact, and the band dissolved. Now the band has reunited to show today's rap-metal upstarts how to properly combine the two genres. Nov. 27: After leading the beloved country-rock band the Mavericks, and most recently singing for the Latin-rock supergroup Los Super Seven, **Raul Malo** is out on his own, touring with a backing band that's something of a supergroup in its own right. The keyboardist Alberto Salas is a veteran of Santana's ensembles, and the percussionist Cougar Estrada once lent his talents to Los Lobos. Expect plenty of Latin-tinged rock and roll from Malo's solo début, "Today."

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Nov. 24: The slide trumpeter Steven Bernstein's band **Sex Mob** mixes antic improvisational jazz with more easily recognized pop themes—their latest album is an interpretation of songs from James Bond movies. Nov. 25: The comedian **Mort Sahl,** making his first appearance in New York City in some ten years.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 23-25: One of the longest-surviving and most prolific bands born of the late-seventies British punk-rock scene, the **Fall** rejected the more cartoonish, sartorial aspects of the movement, but it embraced the fury and adventurous nature at its heart. At the helm through countless shifts of personnel and stylistic flirtations, the lead vocalist and chief whip cracker Mark E. Smith has put the defining stamp on his band's experimental clamor with his gruffly sung-spoken delivery and brazen perspective.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Nov. 23-24: **Robert Randolph,** an astounding twenty-four-year-old pedal steel guitarist from Newark, New Jersey, plays with a rare grace, thanks to the origin of his art—the House of God church, where Randolph long ago picked up the tradition of "sacred steel" gospel music. Over the past year or so Randolph has also become a big presence on more secular terrain. He's played with John Medeski, Derek Trucks, and other members of the jam-band scene. With the up-and-coming singer-songwriter **Shannon McNally.** A native of Long Island, she's Nassau County's answer to Lucinda Williams. Nov. 25: The **Lazy Cowgirls** have been cranking out "Exile on Main Street"-style rock and roll for nearly twenty years.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Nov. 20: The Los Angeles rap collective **Dilated Peoples,** touring in support of its latest release, "Expansion Team." Nov. 21: **Basement Bhangra,** a long-running monthly party featuring ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London. Dining.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—Nov. 23: The **Derek Trucks Band.** The guitarist Trucks, a nephew of the longtime Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks, branches out beyond the strict blues-rock formula of his family.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

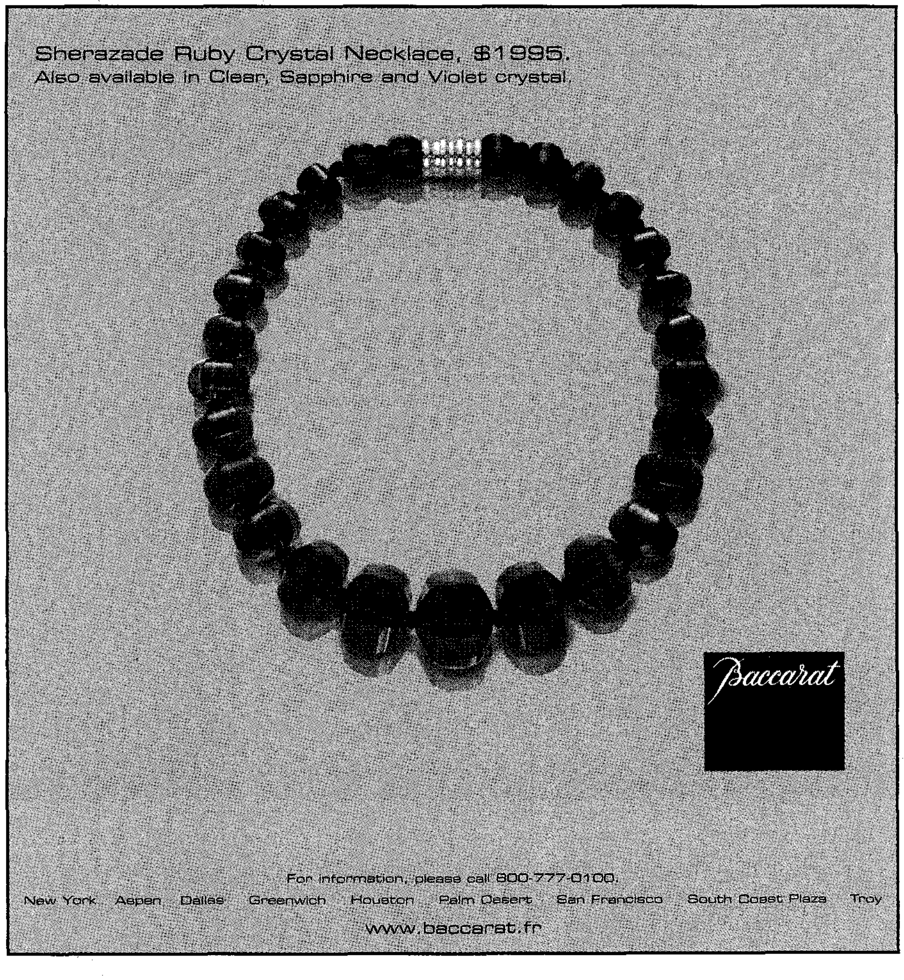
ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Dec. 1: The vocalist **Paula West** has a winning combination of Nancy Wilson-like élan, easy swing, and mountain-spring diction. Her show features a repertoire that jaunts easily from standards and offbeat show tunes to a dual reading (by alternating verses) of "Night in Tunisia" and "Caravan." She gets assistance this week from the **Mulgrew Miller** trio. Dining.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Nov. 25: **Al Di Meola** has come a long way since the days when he spent his time trying to raise smoke from his fret board during the manic heyday of fusion. The still-dexterous guitarist's passion is now world music, and the work of the great Argentine tango master Astor Piazzolla is a high priority for him.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Nov. 21-24: **Dave Holland,** our premier modern bassist, regularly assembles crack ensembles featuring smart players and off-kilter instrumentation—this is one of his stronger units. With the saxophonist **Chris Potter,** the trombonist **Robin Eubanks,** the vibist **Steve Nelson,** and the drummer **Billy Kilson** on hand, Holland's put together a band, not a motley collection of hot-shot soloists. Expect the leader's industrial-strength bass work to simultaneously ground and propel the music, nudging his cohorts into formidable post-bop improvisations. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Nov. 25: "Birds of a Feather," a tribute to Charlie Parker. Paying homage to his onetime boss, the spry seventy-five-year-old drummer **Roy Haynes** has assembled around him a solid group of younger players—the saxophonist **Kenny Garrett,** the trumpeter **Nicholas Payton,** the bassist **Christian McBride,** and the pianist **Dave Kikoski.** They may be bebop babies (compared to Haynes), but they know how to get the job done.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.**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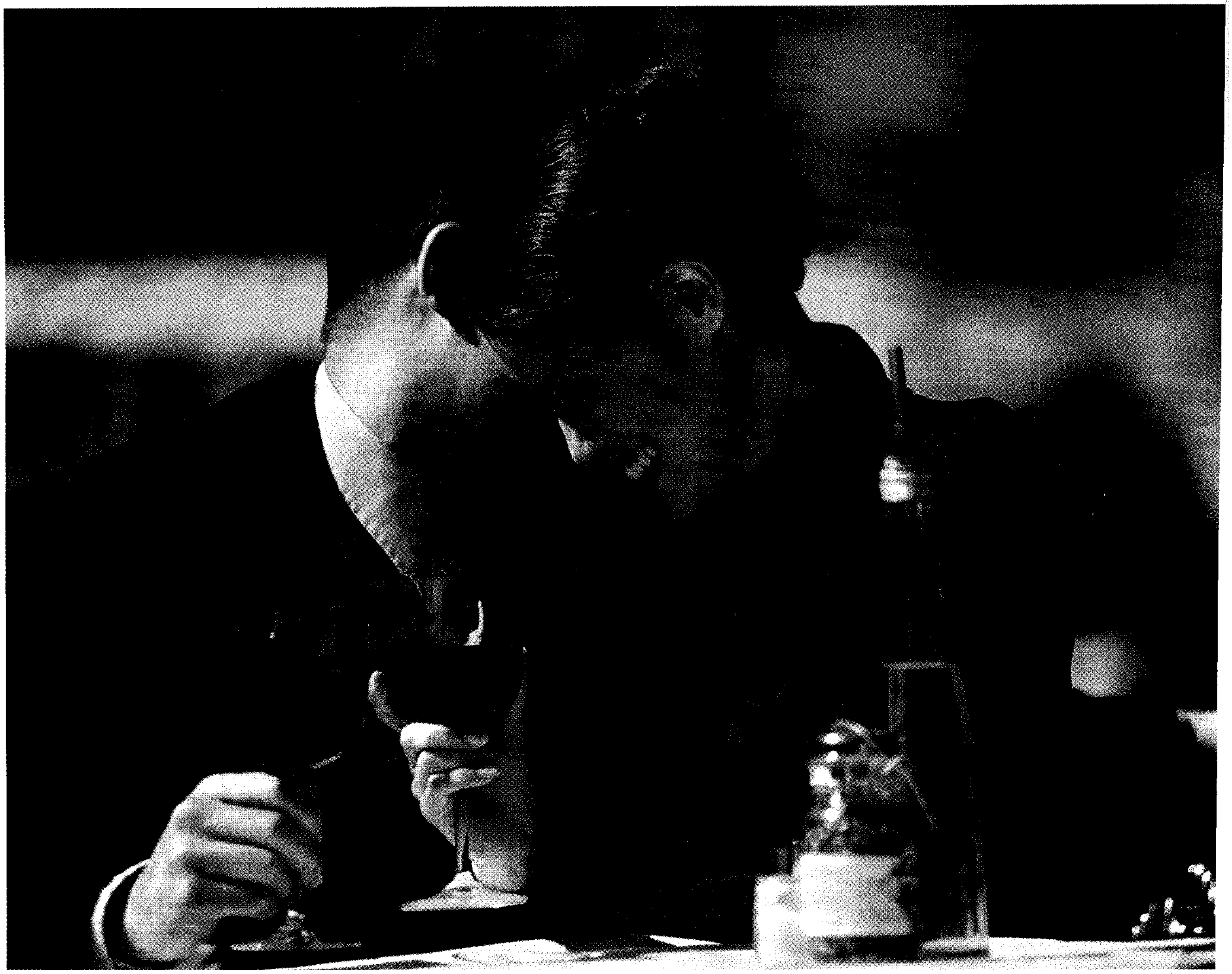

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perfect pairs

by Erika Lenkert

It only takes one dining epiphany to appreciate how food and wine enjoyed together can heighten the overall experience. Some find fireworks in the refreshing combination of mixed greens and goat cheese salad and Sauvignon Blanc or the refined decadence of foie gras and Sauternes. For others it's as simple as a juicy barbecued burger with their favorite Zinfandel. But even if each bite is rapturous, most of us shirk the pairing particulars because the task seems daunting. But is it? In the San Francisco Bay Area, where outstanding restaurant cuisine served with fine wine is more a part of everyday life than it is anywhere else in the country, some of the nation's top experts offer liberating advice. ➳

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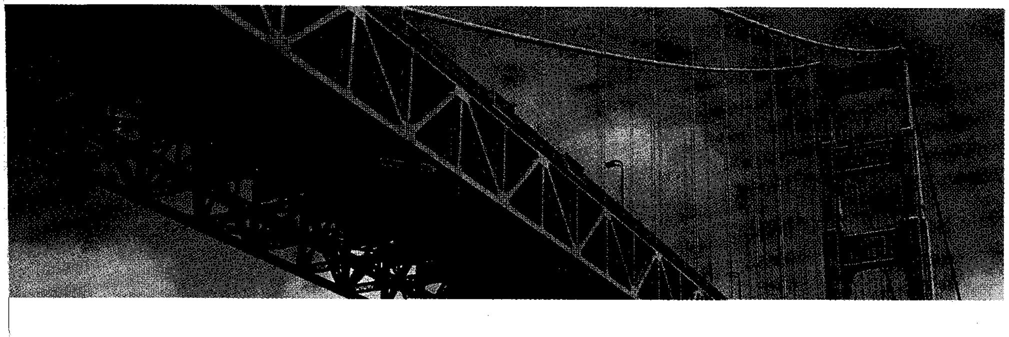


PAIRING PERSPECTIVES

San Francisco's Rubicon restaurant is home to Larry Stone, the country's most recognized Master Sommelier/Wine Director. Stone believes in accenting complementary characteristics and advises, "The basic elements that need to match in food and wine are acidity and intensity." He offers the example of steamed crab with drawn butter and Napa Valley Chardonnay. "Dungeness crab is one of the sweeter shellfish, compelling in aroma and texture and moderately intense in flavor. The drawn butter brings the creamy element into play, which perfectly echoes the slightly sweet, citrus and buttery flavors of the Chardonnay." For a more acidic match he considers a strawberry-rhubarb tart with a late harvest Chenin Blanc. "The rhubarb is so high in acid you need a wine that also has a tremendous amount of acidity as well as the sweetness to match the level of sugar in the dessert," he says.

Stone notes another important consideration: how flavors in wine and food can affect each other. "Wines sometimes balance a dish, dishes sometimes balance a wine, and sometimes both are balanced and work well together." He points to oysters and Muscadet; because the wine is slightly higher in acid, it tones down the oyster flavor, which many diners might find overwhelming if enjoyed with a sweeter wine. In this case the wine balances the dish. For the opposite result he suggests a crisp Sauvignon Blanc that could be perceived as too high in acid when served with salty deep-fried foods. Here the salt tones down the acid. "You're compensating for one wine defect with an exaggerated element in the dish," he explains. "They're counterbalancing each other." When discussing intrinsically balanced wine and food he turns to regional classic combinations: "They are almost always evolved over centuries to be balanced with each other — like Chavignol goat cheese from the Loire with Sancerre or lasagne with Montepulciano d'Abbruzzo."

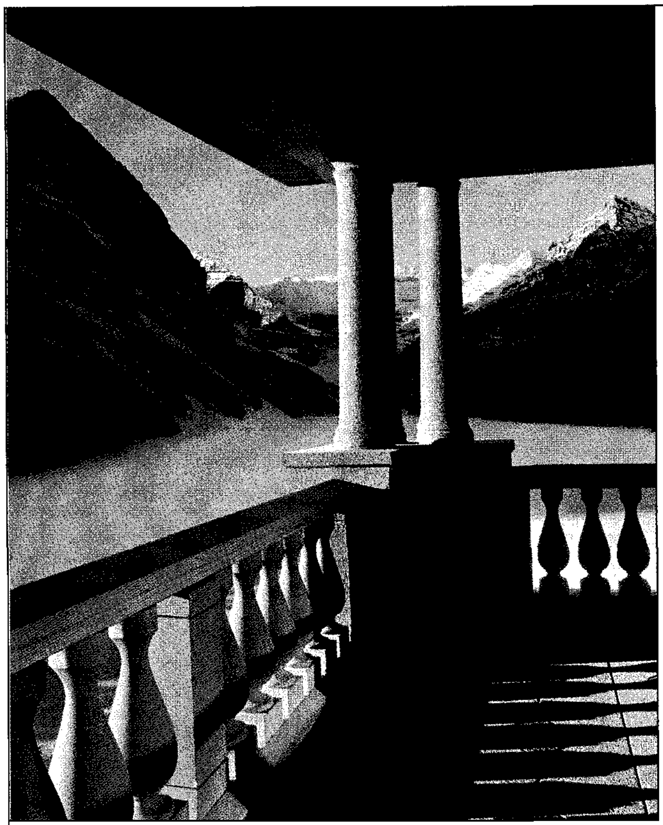
But at The Slanted Door, San Francisco's famed Vietnamese restaurant equally known for its exciting and unusual wine selection, the classic combinations don't apply. According to Wine Buyer Mark Ellenbogen the list is designed around the cuisine's sweet and spicy elements, which without discretionary pairing can have adverse affects on wines' flavors. "Instead of tasting good, dry wine tastes shrill with spicy

FRIENDLY WINE TERMS

Even if you know how to describe your preferred wine style, when selections are unfamiliar it's difficult to know whether a particular Chardonnay, for example, is oaky and creamy or crisp and refined. Thankfully, San Francisco establishments are creating descriptive ways to categorize wine that eliminate the guesswork. Take the Mission District's brand-new Alma restaurant, for example. The Nuevo Latino restaurant divides its white wines into "Crisp, Aromatic Whites" and "Full-Bodied Whites," while red wines are divided among "Juicy, Fruity Reds," "A Little Spice," and "Bring on the Oak." Not a lot of mystery here.

TAKE THE TASTE TEST

To put Master of Wine Tim Hanni's strategy to the test, get a glass of wine, a lemon or lime wedge, and some salt. Take a sip of wine and note its characteristics, then clear your palate with the citrus and salt and again taste the wine, which he promises will seem smoother and fruitier. If you concur, it might be worth remembering this trick the next time you're at the dinner table puckering over a wine that's too tannic for your taste or a crisp wine with citrus to spare.



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dishes, and fruitier wines taste much drier with either sweet marinades or spiciness," he explains. "Wines with high tannins and alcohol levels have a fun-house-mirror effect. Try the wine on its own and it tastes a certain way. Add the food and it distorts elements of the wine where tannins are more tannic and wines with more alcohol taste even hotter."

To ensure diners aren't grimacing over their selection, Ellenbogen considers the heat and/or sugar factors in the dish and wine and heeds, "The more sweet and hot the dish, the sweeter the wine should be. German Rieslings are great because they have high acidity, which is palate cleansing, are very low in alcohol, and have a small amount of residual sugar, which is not sweet but fruity. If you pair a German Riesling with Vietnamese food, especially food that might have spice from pepper or ginger, both the wine and food taste better." And to Ellenbogen heightening the enjoyment of both the food and wine represents pairing at its best.

Master of Wine Tim Hanni recalls the classics to argue his viewpoint. "The one constant in traditional wine cultures is the employment of salt and acidity," he says. But the founder of Napa Valley's WineQuest, a company dedicated to empowering wine consumers to unconditionally enjoy the wines they find most pleasurable, has a revolutionary perspective. He wants to overturn every belief you've ever had about wine pairing with one simple rule: any wine you like can be ideal with any dish.

Hanni dismisses pairing notions as peer pressure, since every palate and taste preference is unique. He suggests that the recipe for success is to "first identify the primary attributes of the wine you like—and don't let anyone sway your opinion—then select the food you really want to eat and enjoy the two together." On the occasion that the combination alters the wine's flavor in a way that displeases you—perhaps it becomes too sour,

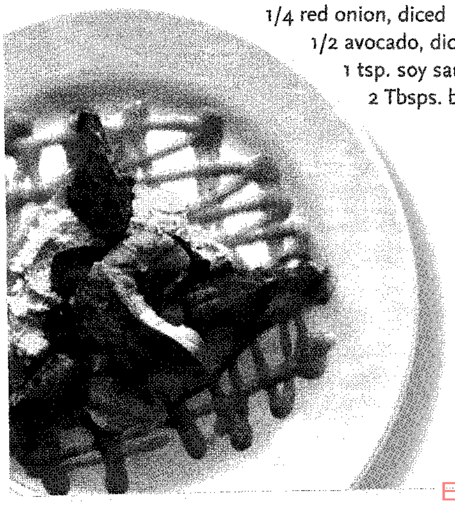
MAYA

Maya led San Francisco's "Nuevo Latino" dining trend with its vibrant SoMa dining room and colorful and sophisticated Modern Mexican cuisine. Executive Chef Richard Sandoval, also of New York's Maya, demonstrates an exciting play on flavors with Langosta y Camarones with Roasted Corn Purée, Watercress Salad, Chile Habanero and Chive Rouille, and Chile de Arbol Vinaigrette paired with a rich, full-bodied white wine such as the 1998 Beringer Private Reserve Chardonnay. The sweetness of the corn purée and spicy shrimp accentuates the wine's crispness, while tartness from the rouille, salad, and vinaigrette pronounces pear flavors and tropical notes. Creamy characters complement each other, and flavors are beautifully balanced.

Langosta y Camarones with Roasted Corn Purée, Watercress Salad, Chile Habanero and Chive Rouille, and Chile de Arbol Vinaigrette

Executive Chef Richard Sandoval
Maya San Francisco

4 ears yellow corn
4 1-lb. lobsters
2 cups plus 2 Tbsps. canola oil
1/3 habanero chile
1 bunch chives
1 egg yolk
2 Tbsps. plus 1 tsp. fresh lime juice
2 tsps. honey
Salt and pepper to taste
3 tomatoes
1 Tbsp. sherry vinegar
2 chiles de arbol (at Mexican groceries), toasted and deveined
8 to 12 cilantro leaves
12 shrimp, deshelled except for tails, and deveined
1/2 cup achiote or adobo paste (at most Mexican groceries)
3 cups heavy cream
1 bunch watercress
1/4 red onion, diced
1/2 avocado, diced
1 tsp. soy sauce
2 Tbsps. butter



Grill corn in the husk for 4 mins. on each side or bake in a preheated 450°F oven for 45 mins. and let cool.

In a large pot boil lobsters for 7 mins., chill in ice water, and deshell. Set aside.

Make chile habanero and chive rouille: blend 1 cup canola oil, habanero chile, and chives. In a bowl whisk together canola oil mixture and egg yolk. Add 2 Tbsps. lime juice, 1 tsp. honey, and salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

Make chile de arbol vinaigrette: blend the seeds of 3 tomatoes (reserve flesh of 1 tomato for watercress salad), 1 cup canola oil, sherry vinegar, chiles de arbol, cilantro, 1 tsp. honey, and salt to taste. Set aside.

Marinate shrimp in achiote paste for 15 mins. In a pan, sauté shrimp in 2 Tbsps. canola oil over medium-high heat. Set aside.

Prepare corn purée: Cut kernels off the roasted corncobs and in a saucepan bring corn, cream, and salt to taste to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 8 mins. Remove from heat, transfer corn to a blender, adding only enough cream needed for a creamy consistency, and purée.

Make watercress salad: mix watercress, red onion, 1 diced tomato without pulp (reserved from chile de arbol), avocado, soy sauce, 1 tsp. lime juice, and salt and pepper to taste.

In a saucepan warm lobster in butter and salt to taste.

Divide corn puree evenly onto 4 dinner plates. Top with watercress salad and lobster. Decoratively arrange shrimp, accent the plate with chile habanero and chive rouille, and serve. SERVES 4.

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VISA

bitter, or astringent or lacks fruitiness and sweetness—he offers a simple solution: add to your food a squeeze of lemon or lime and a dash of salt. This, he says, balances the wine's acidity and tames its more aggressive characteristics. He then adds, "In Europe, in every region where they traditionally serve dry wines, the cuisine has adapted proportionally to the level of saltiness and sourness to ensure the wine is consistently delicious."

Hanni's approach may differ dramatically from traditional pairing notions, but it still exemplifies San Francisco style. Though opinions and preferences are as diverse as the population, local food and wine professionals are unified in their passion for creating truly memorable dining experiences. ✳

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Bernard Chirent

THE LAUREL COURT

The Fairmont San Francisco continues its longstanding tradition of refined hospitality at the comfortably formal Laurel Court. Executive Chef Bernard Chirent's "Cuisine Actuelle," an elegant interpretation of French cuisine made from the freshest ingredients indigenous to California, is as thoughtfully designed as the restaurant's three glorious domes. Chef Chirent exhibits his attention to detail with Lamb Chops with Vegetable Tian and Potato Gratin paired with a rich, hearty, full-bodied red such as 1997 Beringer Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. An ideal balancing act, the ripe, concentrated cherry and black currant flavors accented by round tannins are complemented by the Cabernet sauce and heightened by the lamb, while tarragon and sage echo the wine's herb nuances.

Lamb Chops with Vegetable Tian and Potato Gratin

Executive Chef Bernard Chirent
The Fairmont
San Francisco

1 bottle (750ml) good quality Cabernet Sauvignon
2 cups chicken stock
Sea salt and white pepper to taste
1 large zucchini
1 large yellow squash
3 Japanese eggplants
2 Roma tomatoes
2 sprigs fresh thyme
4 Tbsps. olive oil
2 Yukon gold potatoes
3 oz. grated Gruyère cheese
3 oz. whipping cream
12 frenched lamb chops
2 sprigs fresh tarragon, minced

Prepare sauce: In a saucepot over medium heat, reduce 1/2 bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon by 1/4, about 1 hour. Add the chicken stock and reduce further by 1/4 — about 1/2 hour — or until it becomes thick and coats the back of a spoon. Taste, adding more wine if necessary. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Reserve.

Prepare tian: Slice zucchini, squash, eggplant, and tomatoes into 1/4-inch slices. Place on a sheet pan in a single layer and sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste and fresh thyme leaves. Drizzle with 3 Tbsps. olive oil and broil for 2 to 3 minutes or until lightly browned. Pat with paper towels to remove excess oil and stack, alternating vegetables, making 2 "towers" (or a garland as shown at right) per person. Reserve.

Prepare the gratin: Heat oven to 425°F. Peel the potatoes and slice very thin (like potato chips) and place in a bowl. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add cheese and toss all together. Divide equally into 4 3-inch ramekins, pressing firmly. Add cream just to cover. Bake for about 40 minutes or until bubbling and golden. Reserve.

Prepare chops: Season chops on both sides with salt and pepper. Sauté in 1 Tbsp. olive oil over high heat to brown on each side. Reduce heat and continue to cook to desired doneness. Reserve.

On 4 warmed plates, unmold potatoes in the center. Place 2 vegetable "towers" or a garland on each plate. Reheat sauce, add 1/2 the minced tarragon, and spoon equally on each plate at the base of the potatoes. Rest 3 lamb chops, bone up, against potatoes and on top of the sauce. Scatter remaining tarragon around each plate and serve. SERVES 4.

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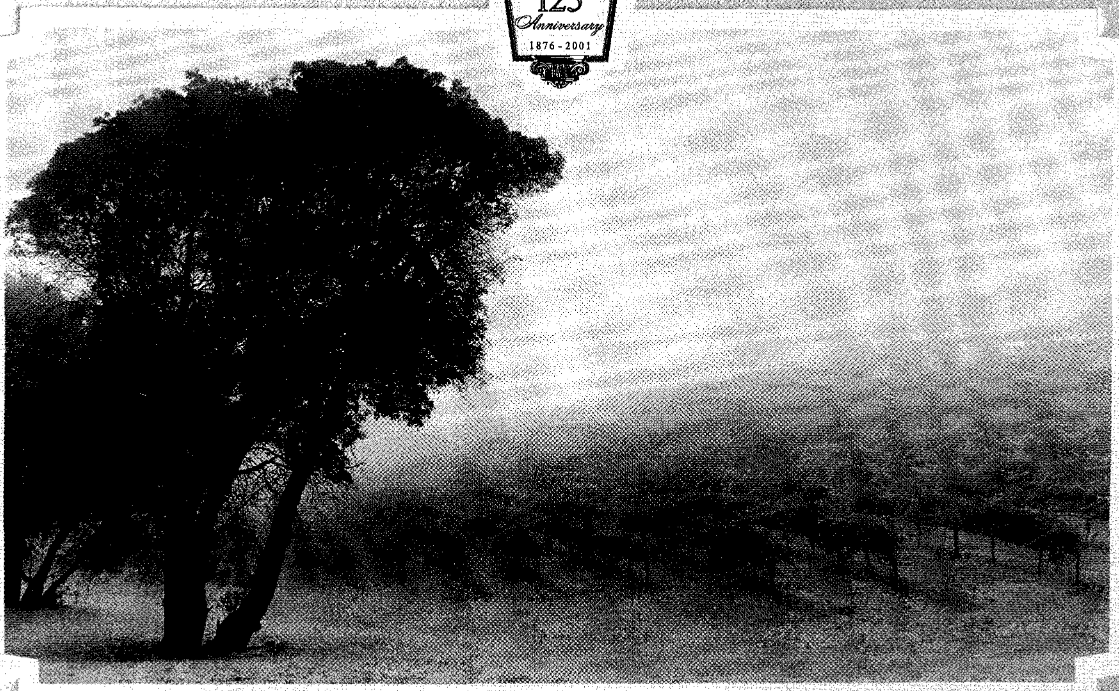

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On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen and the Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

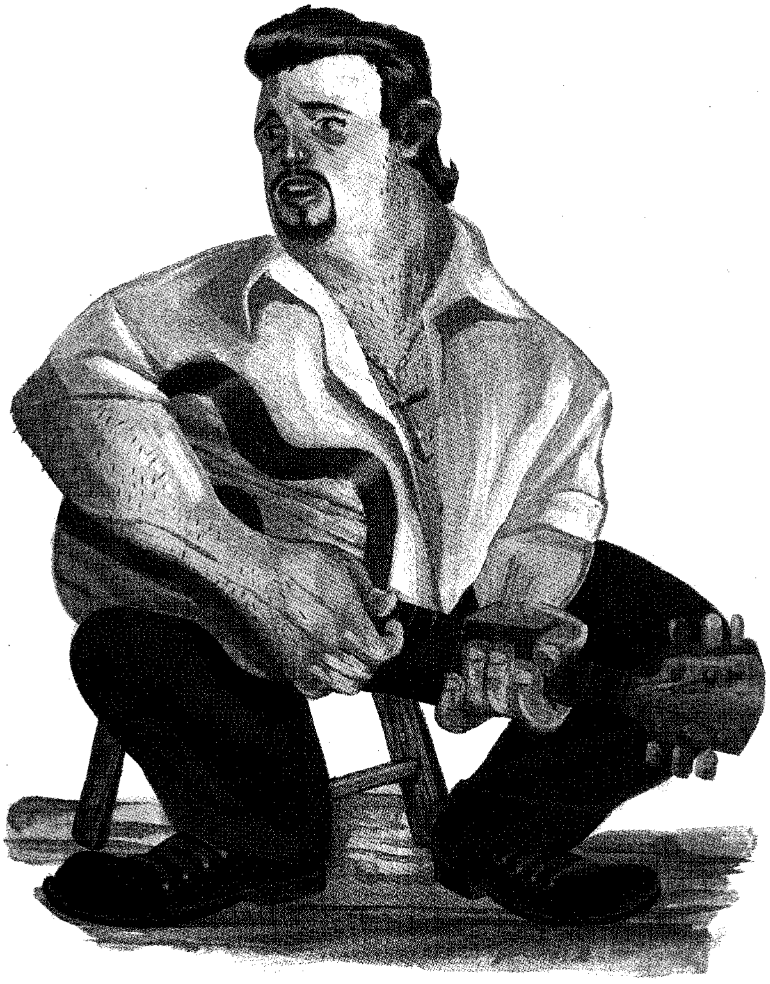
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Nov. 24: **Jimmy Webb** and **Paul Williams,** two wonderful songwriters who kept the larders of pop music full during the sixties and seventies, along with the singing actress **Liz Callaway.** Dining.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—You can almost hear the grass on the savanna rustle when **Abdullah Ibrahim** (here with his trio through Nov. 25) stirs up a lolling South African piano vamp and his bassist and drummer lock together to expertly ride the undulating rhythms. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ

351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Nov. 23-24: The **James Spaulding** quintet. Spaulding, a ubiquitous presence on alto saxophone and flute during the sixties—he was a fixture on Blue Note's more adventurous sessions—may have smoothed out a few of the edges that made his playing so, well, edgy back then, but his taste for heated improvisation remains.



The former Mavericks leader and Los Super Seven veteran Raul Malo, at Irving Plaza.

ZOHAR LAZAR

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Nov. 25: The pianist **Brad Mehldau** likes to take his time to contemplate a tune—in performance, his collective improvisations with longtime bandmates **Jorge Rossy,** on drums, and **Larry Grenadier,** on bass, regularly glide past the ten-minute mark. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Some artists were not meant for retrospectives. In the case of Paul Signac (1863-1935), an acolyte and understudy of Georges Seurat, faint praise would have been more flattering. The young Signac, a determined avant-gardist of middling talent, hitched himself to Seurat's star in 1884. From then on, he served as cheerleader for their willfully formulaic style. Signac's own Pointillist efforts, especially the placid harbor scenes of the eighteen-nineties, have an appealing kind of stippled, calming brightness. But the artist's twin passions (he was an avid yachtsman and a sentimental anarchist) don't resonate much today, and the later paintings show him gradually growing tired of the method he had done so much to promote. Through Dec. 30. ♦ **"Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Drawings and Prints."** Fifty of Bruegel's sixty-one known drawings, many of them paired with the engravings (by other talented hands) for which they were designs, range from acutely poetic landscapes to surreal fantasies that were influenced by Hieronymus Bosch. While taking the dimmest possible view of human character, he embraced raw human energy with a zest that feels all-forgiving. His landscapes comprehend the grandeur and the scraggliness of nature in equal measure. Through Dec. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—An Alberto Giacometti retrospective reacquaints us with the Swiss sculptor's

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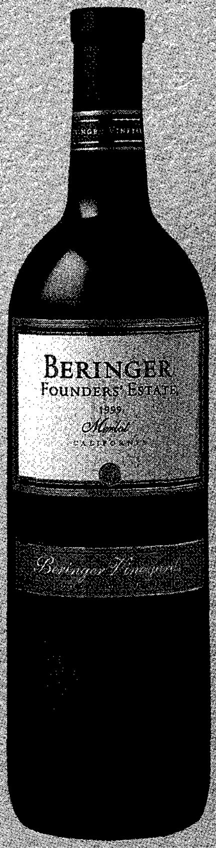

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KATHARINA BOSSE

UNDERGARMENT DISTRICT *E. V. Day, a sculptor who makes politically tinged art with and about women's clothes, has peppered the two-story sculpture court of the Philip Morris Building with a couple of hundred stretched, rigidified thongs and G-strings. The undies hang from fishing line in swooping formations that evoke fighter planes or migratory birds. What topic of civil concern might be addressed by a storm of racy apparel is far from clear, but a lazy viewer may marvel at the architectonic rigor of current naughty-duds design.*

iconic skinny statues while emphasizing his paintings and his less esteemed Surrealist objects of the nineteen-thirties. Revision is not achieved. Except for "The Palace at 4 A.M." and "Woman with Her Throat Cut"—two 1932 marvels that bespeak bolt-from-the-blue inspiration like that of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"—the objects show Giacometti in a weakly pandering mode. The paintings, mostly portraits from the nineteen-fifties, expend obsessive energy to visually skimpy ends. But the great statues are more engaging than ever. These tragicomic presences don't so much stand in the world as stand up to it, ravaged by the very space around them but maintaining vestigial subjectivity in the thrust of a chin, the tilt of a hip, and the set of a shoulder—calling to the heart. Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"New to the Modern: Recent Acquisitions from the Department of Drawings."** For the last eighteen months the museum's drawings department has focussed on acquisitions from the last sixty years, balancing a collection already strong in work from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The new holdings, installed in more or less chronological order, run the gamut from heavy hitters like Willem de Kooning (a salacious graphite "Woman" of Amazonian proportions, from 1965) to relative rookies like the Cuban collective "Los Carpinteros," whose grisaille watercolor from 1999 of tumbledown cinder blocks looks like a map of broken promises. Predictably, the figure emerges as one recent trend, but alongside accomplished work by the usual suspects, including Luc Tuymans and Kara Walker, we are introduced to the anxious Madonnas of Italian artist Margherita Manzelli. Meticulously rendered, they float unmoored on the page, as if ready to drift over to the ranks of the Peyton and Currin waifs across the way. Through Jan. 8. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The retrospective **"Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People"** arrives at the end of a two-year tour—during which serious critical interest in the great cornball illustrator arose, scored some points, and went back into retirement. Rockwell's genius as a visual storyteller proves almost as immune to critical appreciation as to snobbish animus. His three hundred and twenty-two *Saturday Evening Post* covers—arrayed here with some of their deftly painted originals—imagine an America whose chief quality is winsome tolerance: people who are mildly at odds with life or each other but are, after all, perfectly O.K. Even in wartime, his congenital, at times daunting, optimism never faltered. Nor did his hardworking pictorial mastery, with its implicit flattery of popular taste—as if Americans deserved no less than an Escoffier to prepare their hot dogs. Through March 3. ♦ For **"Brazil: Body & Soul"** the Thomas Krens team has gone to new extremes, utterly transforming the museum and leaving one awed by the mega-exhibition's scope, design, audacity, and cost. Under the direction of Jean Nouvel, the entire interior has been painted black, and the rotunda is now a Stygian theatre, with a massive baroque altarpiece in its center. From there, viewers ascend past ranks of polychromed Madonnas, carved lions, ex-votos, and tribal videos and arrive, finally, at a celestial ring of white rooms, where the baroque (which lasted nearly three centuries in Brazil) abruptly gives way to modernism. After so much blood and gold, the twentieth century's primary colors are both a relief and a disappointment (the change is like stepping from purgatory to preschool). In both sections, masterpieces are scarce: judging by this survey, Brazilians, like Guggenheim curators, prefer spectacle to refinement. Through Jan. 27. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence"** smashingly reintroduces us to an artist who, when he died last year at the age of eighty-three, could have seemed an overfamiliar icon (or token, even) of African-American artistry: earnest social realist in mission, generic modernist in style. That estimate overlooks Lawrence's intensity as a truth teller. His Depression-era Harlem vignettes bite with savage joy, and his classic sixty-painting suite, "The Migration of the Negro" (1941), is more moving and informative than ever. Less impassioned later works still grip the viewer with the artist's determination to get his subjects exactly right. Blunt physicality (of touch and scale) is essential to their urgency—a quality that often leaks away in reproductions. Above all, the Lawrence of this show no longer feels like a special case in American art: his enterprise is the bone and sinew of what we are. Through Feb. 3. ♦ **"Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977."** This historical survey focusses on early experimentation with film projections, as well as with sound, live video feeds, and holography. The curator Chrissie Iles knows that today's audience equates projection with the MTV glamour, which may be why she opens with a Warhol split-screen projection of Edie Sedgwick. The double Edie gives way to a double Dan Graham (the two-part projection "Helix/Spiral"), and from that point the emphasis is on projection as radical experiment rather than high-gloss entertainment. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT PHILIP MORRIS

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—The sculptor E. V. Day has hung a mildly embarrassing array of thongs and G-strings (strenuously ignored by midtowners who lounge beneath it) in the Philip Morris sculpture court. The display is lyrical and nasty in about equal measure. Too small to register strongly in the vast space, the origamilike units await a wandering eye. Through Dec. 16. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—Security is tight at **"Pearls"** for old-fashioned reasons: there are more valuable jewels and jewel-encrusted stuff here than in Fay Weldon's "The Bulgari Connection." The key to Caracas's Iglesia de San Pablo tabernacle is dwarfed by its gold-and-pearl-tasselled key ring, the only reminder of the glory of the tabernacle itself, missing since the nineteenth century. An Art Nouveau Fabergé egg, a fruit vender's "Pearly King" suit covered with mother-of-pearl buttons, and an oyster shell large enough to cradle a baby also turn heads. Display cases about the science and natural history of the mollusk by-product loiter around the edges, enumerating the differences between types of pearls and the processes by which they occur naturally and are cultured. A beautiful film shows pearl divers descending and returning to the surface, without scuba gear. Another film shows oysters being filleted live and sewn up again to make cultured pearls. Through April 14. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Slinkys and Tupperware share equal billing with Pollock and Calder in **"Vital Forms: American Art and Design in the Atomic Age, 1940-1960,"** an innovative show dedicated to organic forms in art and design in the mid-twentieth century. In the main gallery, the objects are grouped by affinity rather than medium, so an Ellsworth Kelly painting in biomorphic black and blue hangs above a white Noguchi sofa and near a pair of Charles James ball gowns. In one of the show's most arresting moments, a photograph of a postatomic mushroom cloud is installed near a Barnett Newman painting from 1946 titled "Pagan Void," its gaping center a wrenching Rorschach of anxiety. Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"Wit and Wine: A New Look at Ancient Iranian Ceramics from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation"** presents vessels, primarily for wine, many shaped like animals or painted with their likenesses. Through Dec. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

LEON GOLDIN
Goldin's new canvases have an appealing, radiant ponderousness. Most are composed of five or six lumpy shapes, like boulders or ingots, piled together toward the center of the rectangle. They suggest still-lifes and landscapes simultaneously—they could be denser versions of Matisse's fruit-laden tabletops, or Franz Kline's late full-color abstractions. But Goldin's interchangeable titles ("Connection," "Journey," "Return," and so on) hint at another kind of ponderousness as well. Through Dec. 1. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730.)

APRIL GORNIK
Those now offering their work with fifty per cent less irony are way behind; Gornik has been 99$^{44}/_{100}$ per cent irony-free for years. Her recent soothing charcoal landscapes are full of still, reflective water and tall, slim trees. And some of the accompanying oils look like an attempt to settle a family argument. The ocean in "The Old Man's Boat and the Old Man's Dog," by her husband, Eric Fischl (now hanging at C&M Art's "Naked Since 1950" show), is immense and ominously dark, rising to fill the frame. In Gornik's version, "Bay at Sunset," the sea is contained and bright, reflecting the sky's salmon-colored clouds. Through Dec. 1. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

PER KIRKEBY
The Danish painter (also sculptor, poet, essayist, and geologist) is an abstract elegist of European values: romantic inwardness and the ever-presence of the past. His somber, predominantly gold-and-green new paintings are redolent of northern earth and woods, with motifs of felled tree trunks that separate his suggestions of sky, foliage, and underground strata. He handles paint with a gruff tenderness that evokes touch and smell as much as sight, and still manages to make sophisticated nods to Philip Guston's bulbous forms and Cy Twombly's scribbled line. Kirkeby gravely shoulders terrific burdens of both nature and culture. Through Jan. 26. (Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 988-1623.)

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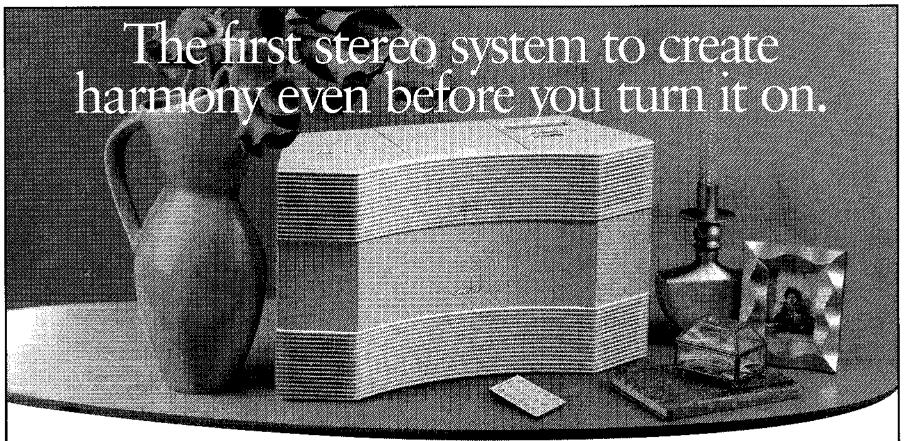
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GABRIEL OROZCO
Everybody's favorite international art nomad returns with no end of slight, delightful surprises. These include elegant drawings that combine such motifs as hand prints and leaf prints and Japanese kimono-pattern stencils; hanging sculptures that employ agave and bamboo leaves, colored rubber balls, and lint; and photographs that document minor pranks and trickery (dead leaves amidst a rain forest's riot of life, for example, or a slice of lime stuck into the coin slot of a pay phone). A half-hour video about kite-flying in India—with little neon-colored paper squares struggling aloft in populous, noisy towns—is transporting in more ways that one. (And get a load of Orozco's high-handed compliment to our own Ellsworth Kelly.) This Mexican smoothy goes somewhere, does something nonchalantly superb, and moves on: the tourist as seer. Through Dec. 29. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.)

MARK ROTHKO
The Ab-Ex Master's early works, so often panned, look surprisingly good in this ample selection. Their social-realist subject matter is utterly conventional (lots of subway platforms), but Rothko's brushwork broadcasts his impatience: you can feel him straining for something more. The result is a quirky, resolute awkwardness that flares up memorably at times, especially in a smeary, feverish image from 1932 of three nudes bathing under a darkening, blood-red horizon. The small canvas offers unexpected evidence of Rothko's interest in early Cézanne, and suggests a link between the two artists: disdain for facility. Through Jan. 5. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

Short List

VALDIRLEI DIAS NUNES
Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.
Through Nov. 24.

ROY LICHTENSTEIN
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through Jan. 12.

ROBERT SMITHSON
James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171.
Through Nov. 24.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

ANGELO FILOMENO
The Italian-born Filomeno "paints" with a sewing machine, embroidering whimsical, elaborate imagery onto sheets of stretched shantung silk. The results, with their shimmering, finely woven surfaces, bear some resemblance to the elegant neo-Surrealism of Inka Essenhigh. But Filomeno's iconography, with its winged turds, capillary-thronged hearts, and skeletons, is baudier and more legible than Essenhigh's—it suggests an incongruously refined version of tattooing. Through Dec. 1. (Audiello, 526 W. 26th St. 675-9082.)

"SNAKES, SNAILS, AND PUPPY-DOG TAILS"
This show catalogues the self-destructive impulses of boys both big and little. Several memorable images of lone youths, among them James Reilly's painting of a young boy with a bloody nose, seem like mere run-ups to two groups of photographs, by Eve Fowler and Michael Meads, of young men who have grown more serious about their self-destruction. These mini-shows, Fowler's grid of portraits of hustlers and young homeless men with AIDS and Meads's candid photographs of Southern boys, are sobering. Mead's lush images of shirtless rednecks playing with drinks and guns revive the always effective contrast of young flesh and danger. Graham Durward provides the show's punch line, a bank of fake snow signed in yellow. Through Nov. 23. (Nikolai, 505 W. 22nd St. 414-8511.)

Short List

MARCO BRAMBILLA
Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.
Through Dec. 8.

JOHN CURRIN
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.
Through Dec. 15.

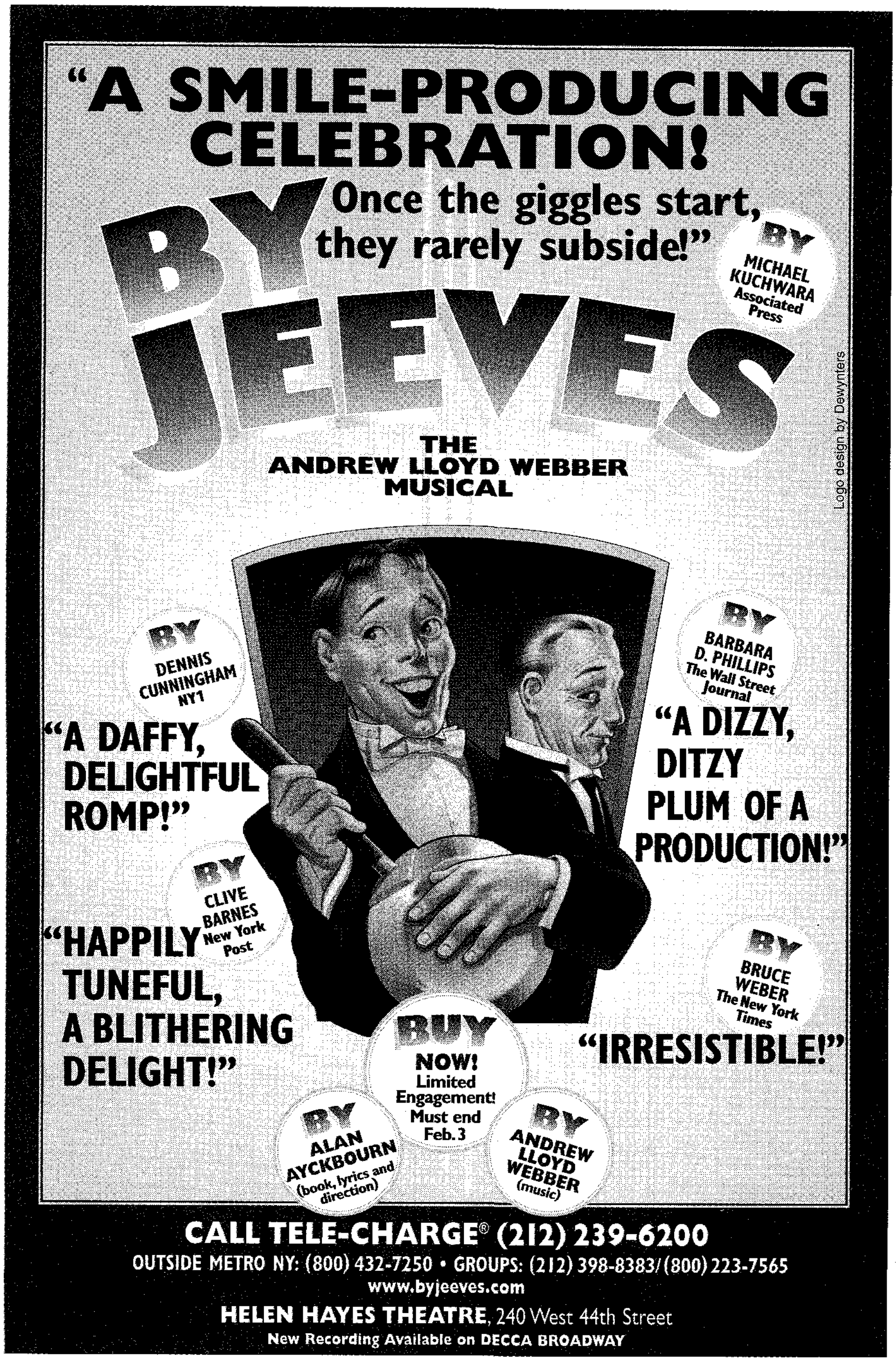
RICHARD SERRA
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through Dec. 15.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

PATTY CHANG
This young artist presents endurance-based performances documented on videotape along with several photographs. The most affecting performance finds the artist seated on the floor with an excruciating grimace and a writhing wet spot on her white shirt, thanks to the eels that are trapped inside. The performance may be heavy-handed, with obvious sexual overtones and implications of identity politics, but the experience for viewers is electrifying, even though the eels are not. Through Dec. 8. (Tilton/Kustera, 49 Greene St. 941-1775.)

FRANK OWEN
In a set of anarchic, gem-bright paintings called "Threaders," Owen offers his own version of today's mongrelized abstraction. Weird, elegant whorls and scribbles float through a kind of terrazzo limbo: up close, the paintings are full of lariatlike grace notes; step back a bit, and vertigo ensues. In the rear gallery, Owen creates a calmer mood in a group of scuffed, undergrowthy abstractions aptly titled "Between Seasons." The two sets of cannily complementary works make for Owen's finest show in years. Through Dec. 5. (Nancy Hoffman, 429 West Broadway. 966-6676.)

ANDREA ZITTEL
From her customized mobile living units (RVs for aesthetes) of the nineties to last summer's "Pocket Property," a forty-ton concrete island-cum-crash pad anchored off the coast of Denmark, the artist has made a career out of simplifying daily life through whimsically systematized design. Her latest project, a series of fourteen sorting trays of various sizes, was conceived by tracing around piles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of the artist's own clutter and excising the forms out of rectangles of birch. With their compartments painted in mid-century-modern hues like Dansk enamelware red, the handsome objects look like urban TV-dinner trays and also suggest a utilitarian update of Giacometti's Surrealist game boards. Through Dec. 15. (Inglett, 100 Wooster St. 343-0573.)

Short List

KEITH SONNIER
Location One, 26 Greene St. 334-3347.
Through Nov. 28.
GLORIA VANDERBILT
K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 219-9918.
Through Dec. 15.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DUANE MICHALS
Michals has matured into photography's crotchety uncle, here taking on today's art stars in a show of elaborate parodies, as funny as they are obnoxious and mean. Among his victims are Andreas Gursky, lampooned in a deadpan, mural-size print of a pickle, and Vik Muniz and Jeff Koons: a dollar sign in white powder—described as dandruff—mimics Muniz mimicking Koons. Pipilotti Rist, Vanessa Beecroft, and Nan Goldin also get lambasted, and a classic set of six self-portrait film stills as "Sidney Sherman" includes pictures of the parodist in a white wig and nail polish, hitchhiking from Spring Street to Prince Street. The words scrawled across the bottom of each faux-Cindy Sherman print skewer the pretentious art theory she inspires, while an enlargement of a recent Michals parody of criticism—a rhyming essay—acknowledges the artist's own early excesses. Through Dec. 1. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

TRACEY MOFFATT
When she learned she was in the running to become an official photographer at the 2000 Olympic Games and then learned she hadn't got the job, Moffatt set to work on a series of decidedly unofficial images—she shot from television, focussing on those who placed fourth in their events, just missing the bronze medal. Her best pictures capture her subjects the moment they hear their results. One Ukrainian runner, with a gold necklace under his uniform, manages a smile; an American swimmer looks on the brink of despair. The project is snide but somewhat sweet; Moffatt makes these runners-up into stars. Through Dec. 8. (Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.)

"SEPTEMBER 11 PHOTO PROJECT"
This impromptu nonprofit exhibit was born when its founders noticed "one, that an incredible number of people were taking pictures, and two, that spontaneous shrines were being damaged by the rain and cleared away." Like "Here Is New York," it is liberally curated—volunteers will catalogue and hang any three photographs that contributors deem "personally meaningful" in response to the tragedy, along with up to thirty words per picture. To date, more than four hundred amateur and professional photographers have brought in their impressions of September 11th and its aftermath, to be displayed, "in the spirit of the AIDS quilt, for the living." Through Dec. 24. (September 11 Photo Project, 26 Wooster St. 358-3423.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Helmut Newton: Work,"** a retrospective; **"The Construction of the Paris Opera: Photographs of Delmaet and Durandelle"**; and **" 'Greed' and Other Recent Acquisitions"** are on show through Dec. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

HARRY BENSON
Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.
Through Dec. 13.
IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM
Stevenson, 338 W. 23rd St. 352-0070.
Through Jan. 5.
NIKKI S. LEE
Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.
Through Dec. 1.
JOEL MEYEROWITZ
Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway, 625-3434.
Through Dec. 15.
SARAH MOON
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.
Through Dec. 8.
HELMUT NEWTON
Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 752-2929.
Through Dec. 21.
"HERE IS NEW YORK"
Here Is New York, 116 Prince St. 334-6684.
Through Dec. 24.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Verdi's **"Luisa Miller,"** cherished for its lyrical freshness and unaffected drama (about doomed love and class conflict in a mountain village), receives a solemn and conservative production from Elijah Moshinsky, with dark, imposing sets by Santo Loquasto (Woody Allen's longtime collaborator). James Levine's conducting is typically lively and well paced; Neil Shicoff sings Rodolfo with force and splendor; and the young Canadian baritone Phillip Ens, in a tour de force, makes the role of Wurm (usually a stock villain) into a full and sympathetic character. Also with

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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

Turning Japanese

MARCELLUS HALL

When the Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake first saw the space that would become his New York flagship store, he knew just what he wanted—a Frank Gehry tornado running through it. Though the shop opened last month a little behind schedule (the original launch date was September 13th), Miyake got his twister. “It’s titanium, the same material as Guggenheim Bilbao,” says Stephanie Phair, the press rep for **TRIBECA ISSEY MIYAKE** (119 Hudson St.; 226-0100), resplendent in a puffy burnt-orange Miyake sweater vest. Gehry and Miyake ended up collaborating on the shop, the former premises of a turn-of-the-century textile factory and more recently home to a health-food store. Now, part of the floor has been replaced by specially made glass, revealing not just hundred-year-old beams but glimpses of the selling area below, including a bird’s-eye view of Miyake’s new A-POC line. “A-POC is really Miyake’s baby these days,” Phair says. “He’s always wanted to dress people with a single piece of fabric.” A-POC (it stands for “a piece of cloth”) uses technology out of an H. G. Wells novel, when a length of fabric is fed into one end of a computer-programmed machine, full-blown anoraks and evening gowns apparently pop out the other side. Though the original A-POC concept eschewed cutting and sewing, this rigor has clearly been compromised: a multi-hued A-POC peasant dress ($430) shows evidence of a successful encounter with a pair of pinking shears.

Impeccable workmanship has elevated the follies at **COMME DES GARÇONS** (520 W. 22nd St.; 604-9200) to cult status. The venerable shop is in the Chelsea gallery district and has curved fun-house corridors and an apple-green plastic back wall. Rei Kawakubo, Comme’s designer, specializes in the kind of clothes that might have been made by Kiki de Montparnasse, Man Ray’s muse and lover, who once cut two Schiaparelli dresses in half lengthwise, sewed the incompatible pieces together, and went out on the town. This season, Kawakubo has affixed a deconstructed corset to a nylon slip, cut a hole in the back of a fake-leather snowflake-printed jacket, and tie-dyed a roomy cabled cardigan that would otherwise bear a marked resemblance to the Mexican sweaters sold at street fairs ($995). A recessed back-lit case full of gold safety pins looks like an art installation, but a salesman who has a ducktail hairdo and is wearing one of those rainbow cardigans explains, “They’re just pins, and they’re for sale. They’re meant to close, like, our asymmetrical boiled-wool jackets.”

The tweed overcoat at **YOHJI YAMAMOTO** (103 Grand St.; 966-9066) requires no pins for fastening. It’s double-breasted with a shawl collar, and though the shop claims its design was inspired by Pépé le Moko, it could just as well have come from the armoire of Charles Foster Kane. But not everything here is as easy to slip into as a chesterfield. A one-armed gabardine blouson that looks like a chic straitjacket is described by a saleswoman as “sort of a sleeved capelet, but also sporty!” Sleeves, or the lack of them, are an enduring theme for Yamamoto, who has provided a capacious swing coat ($2,060) with a hood but only tiny sleeves that end way above the elbows. When it’s pointed out to the staff that this might lead a person to develop the grippe, a solution is brought over from the accessories table: “Look! Opera gloves!”

—*Lynn Yaeger*

Marina Mescheriakova, Denyce Graves, Nikolai Putilin, and Hao Jiang Tian. (Nov. 21 at 8.) ♦ **“La Traviata,”** with June Anderson, Vinson Cole, and Juan Pons; Maurizio Benini conducts. (Nov. 23 at 8.) ♦ **“Madama Butterfly,”** with Veronica Villarroel, Jane Bunnell, Walter Fraccaro, and Kim Josephson; Marco Armiliato. (Nov. 24 at 1.) ♦ Otto Schenk’s production of Strauss’s **“Arabella”** returns with an impressive cast, including Renée Fleming (in her house début in the role), Barbara Bonney, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, and Eric Halfvarson; Christoph Eschenbach, a stylish Strauss conductor, makes his Met début. (Nov. 26 at 8.) ♦ **“Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg,”** with Karita Mattila, Jill Grove, Ben Heppner, Matthew Polenzani, James Morris, Eike Wilm Schulte, and René Pape; James Levine. (Nov. 27 at 6.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA
The hardy chamber company presents the final performances of **“Tosca,”** its second production of the season, directed and conducted by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Nov. 23-24 at 7:30 and Nov. 25 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
When Samuel Barber died, in 1981, his Violin Concerto—like so many of his works, an exquisite balance of Italianate melody and Germanic craftsmanship—was a program rarity. Now it’s performed all the time, but Joshua Bell’s playing, full of earnest lyricism and athletic bounce, should make the Philharmonic’s presentations stand out. Leonard Slatkin, a passionate advocate of American music, conducts the concerts, which also feature Stravinsky’s complete ballet music for “The Firebird” and Mozart’s Symphony No. 30. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Nov. 21 and Nov. 23-24 at 8 and Nov. 27 at 7:30.)

GREGG SMITH SINGERS
The Singers begin their thirtieth season of New York concerts with a program combining European repertory (Verdi’s strange and haunting Ave Maria), American classics (by Billings and Ives), and contemporary works (by Edwin London and Andrew Rindfleisch). (St. Peter’s Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Nov. 24 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

CHOIR OF ST. THOMAS CHURCH
The renowned Anglican choir of men and boys sings an Evensong service devoted to the music of William Byrd (the “Great Service” and the motet “Laudibus in sanctis”). (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. Nov. 25 at 4.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC
Two programs with the Fine Arts String Quartet and the violist Toby Hoffman. Nov. 22 and Nov. 24 at 7:30: Mendelssohn’s radiant String Quintet No. 1 in A Major, full of youthful energy, shares the program with the rich, late-Romantic Quintet in F Major by Bruckner, his only important chamber work. ♦ Nov. 23 at 7:30 and Nov. 25 at 4: Mendelssohn’s Quintet No. 2, along with quartets by Dohnányi and Ralph Evans, the group’s first violinist. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND
The clarinettist Vadim Lando, the violinist Lisa Lee, and others present a program featuring Brahms’s Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, at City Island’s charming Le Refuge Inn. A reception follows. (620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. Nov. 25 at 12:30. For more information, call 927-9194.)

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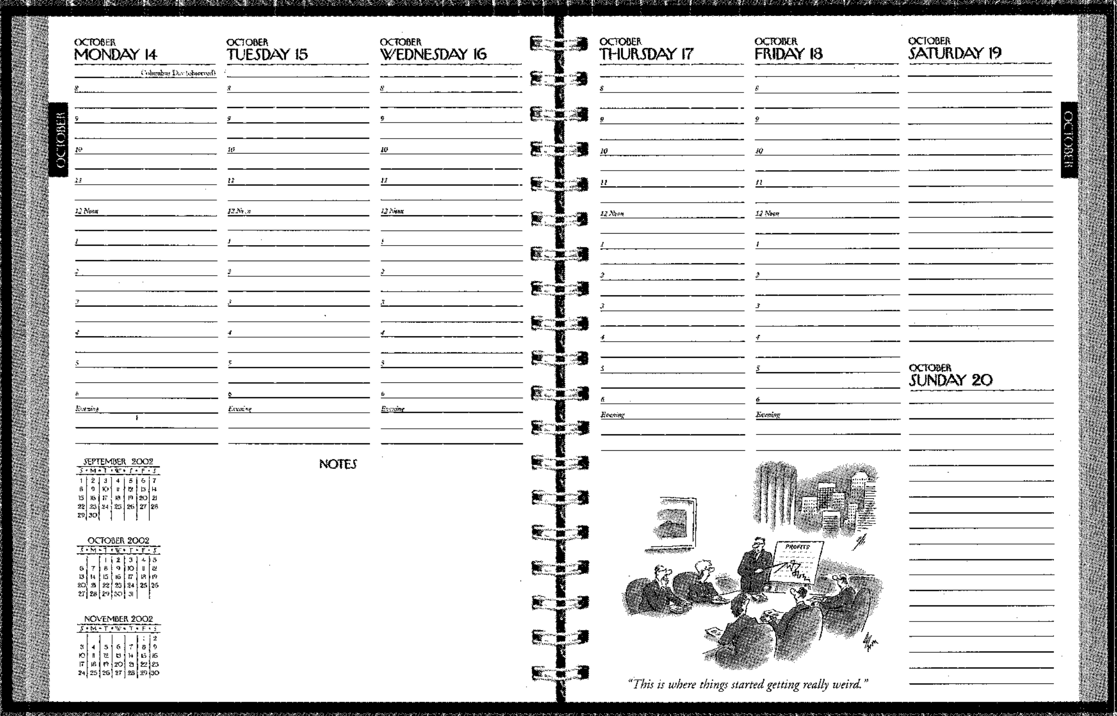

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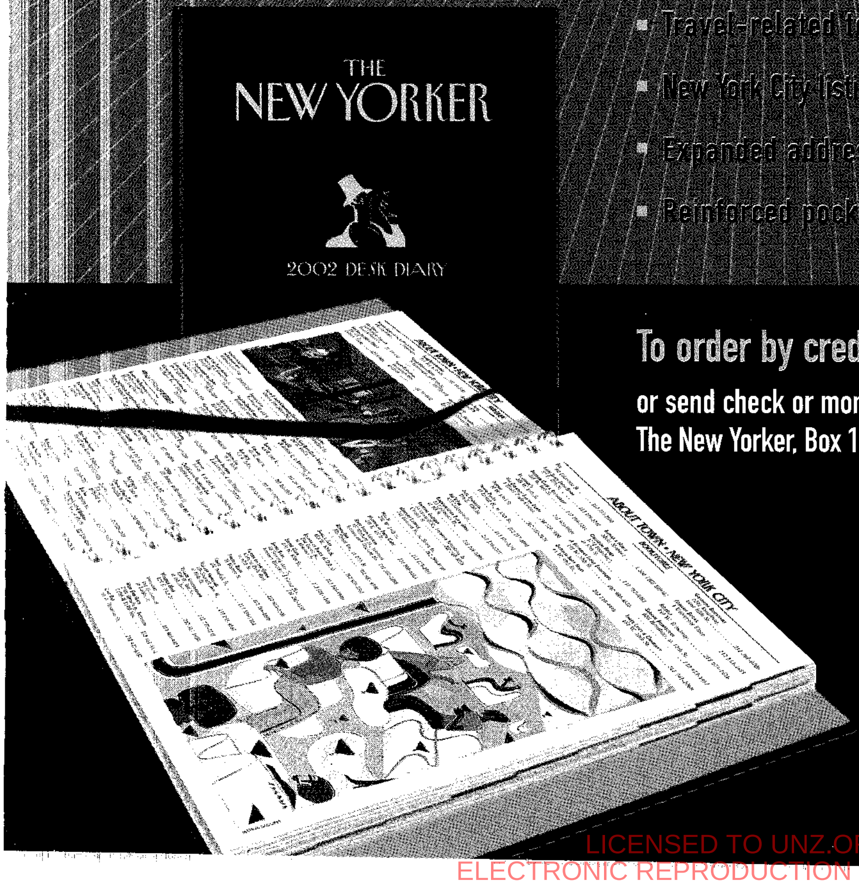

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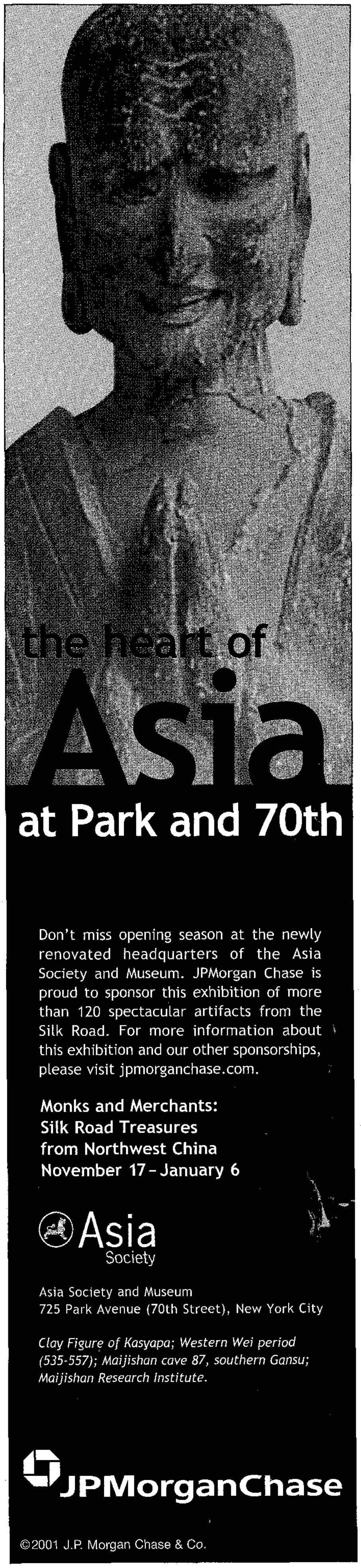

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formance, present Schubert's "Winterreise" at Corpus Christi Church. (529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Nov. 25 at 4.)

ST. LAWRENCE STRING QUARTET
This young Canadian group is untouchable in Romantic repertory that emphasizes the lyrical voice, like the quartets of Tchaikovsky, which they've recently recorded; their playing combines reverent attention to detail with the unfettered energy of musicians who've grown up in the age of rock. They present an all-Tchaikovsky program at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a good tonic for the autumn chills, featuring the rarely performed Quartet No. 3 in E-Flat Minor and, with guests, the string sextet "Souvenir de Florence." (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Nov. 26 at 8.)

IVAN MORAVEC
Clarity, precision, and an elegant cantabile style have been the hallmarks of this veteran Czech pianist, who presents his only New York recital this season at Carnegie Hall. Music by Chopin (the Ballade in F Minor and the complete Préludes, Op. 28), a specialty of his, dominates the recital, which also includes works by Debussy and Janáček (the "From the Street" Sonata, from 1905). (247-7800. Nov. 27 at 7:30.)

COURTENAY BUDD
The young American soprano, a winner of the 2001 Young Concert Artists Auditions, presents a program combining classic art songs by Debussy, Wolf, Schubert ("The Shepherd on the Rock," with the clarinettist Todd Palmer), and Rachmaninoff with contemporary American works by Rorem, Hoiby, Heggie, and Osvaldo Golijov ("Lúa Descolorida," an aria from the acclaimed "Passion According to St. Mark"). The pianist is Thomas Bagwell. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 307-6656. Nov. 27 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Nov. 26 at 7:30: By Michael Heller and Kathryn Levy, from their poetry. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 26 at 8: By Hilton Als, Carlos Dews, Josephine Humphreys, Elizabeth McCracken, Francine Prose, and other writers and poets, from the work of Carson McCullers. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.) ♦ Nov. 27 at 6:30: By the poets Anna Rabinowitz and Matthea Harvey, from their work. The poet David Lehman will moderate a discussion with the two following the reading. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 229-5611.)

TALKS
Nov. 25 at 12:30: The Christmas-tree-ornament designer Christopher Radko discusses decorating for the holidays, at a signing of his new book, "Christopher Radko's Heart of Christmas." (Barnes & Noble, Fifth Ave. at 48th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 25 at 7:30: The actress Julie Andrews talks about her other career as a children's book author. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.) ♦ Nov. 27 at 6:30: The longtime diplomat Shashi Tharoor, who is also the author of the novel "Riot: A Love Story," discusses politics in India. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 817-2005.) ♦ Nov. 27 at 6:30: Declan Kiely, a graduate student at the University of London's Institute of English Studies, talks about W. B. Yeats's lecture tours of America. (American Irish Historical Society, 991 Fifth Ave., near 80th St. For reservations, which are required, call 288-2263, ext. 31.)

WALKS
Nov. 23 at 1: For those who didn't get enough at the holiday table, Big Onion Walking Tours offers a "Post-Thanksgiving Multi-Ethnic Eating Tour" of the Jewish Lower East Side, Chinatown, and Little Italy. (For more information, call 439-1090.) ♦ Nov. 24 at 9 A.M.: Overeaters might consider Shorewalkers' annual "Walk Off the Turkey" hike along the Hudson River, from South Ferry to the Little Red Light House, beneath the George Washington Bridge. (For more information, call 330-7686, or visit shorewalkers.org.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Arabian Days

In 1946, Denys Johnson-Davies, a Canadian-born, British-educated translator living in Cairo, published a volume of short stories by the Egyptian author Mahmoud Taymour. It was one of the first books of Arabic short stories to appear in English translation, and in the ensuing half-century Johnson-Davies has produced more than twenty-five volumes of translations, including several by the Nobelist Naguib Mahfouz.

Johnson-Davies notes that many talented Arabic writers live outside the Arab world: for instance, the Lebanese novelist Hanan al-Shaykh, the British-based author of **ONLY IN LONDON** (Pantheon), which was translated from the Arabic by Catherine Cobham and tells the story of four strangers who meet on a plane returning from Dubai. And the Egyptian writer Nabil Naoum Gorgy, who now resides in Paris, has published a promising short-story collection, **THE SLAVE'S DREAM AND OTHER STORIES** (Quartet/Interlink). Johnson-Davies, who translated Gorgy's work, says that it was ignored despite showing "a talent nurtured by such unlikely influences as Borges and Kawabata."

The Sudanese author Tayeb Salih has two books available in translation, the novel **SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH** (Three Continents) and **THE WEDDING OF ZEIN AND OTHER STORIES** (Three Continents), both translated from the Arabic by Johnson-Davies. Though Salih's work is deeply rooted in local culture, Johnson-Davies says it has a universal appeal: "He writes in the main about simple peasant people living in a village on the Nile, but they are individuals with very much the same preoccupations as anyone else. I recollect a scene where several of the characters boast about the merits of the donkeys they are riding, as though one was driving a Porsche, another a Maserati, and so on!"

—*William Cohen*

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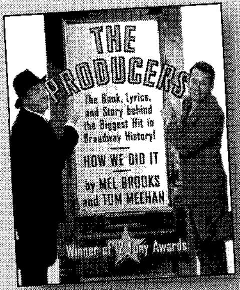
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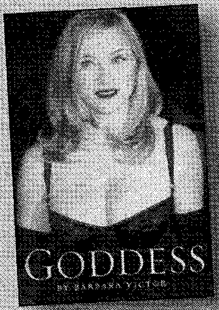
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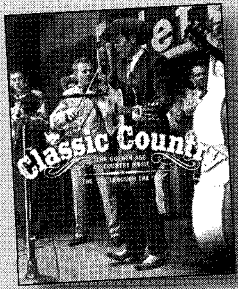
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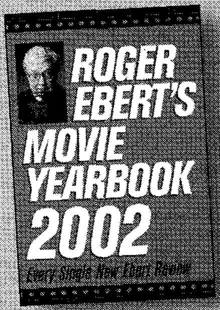
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The twin brothers Oxide and Danny Pang directed this thriller in which a deaf-mute is trained as a Mob assassin. In Thai. Opening Nov. 23. (The Screening Room.)

BLACK KNIGHT
A comedy with Martin Lawrence as a theme-park employee who gets transported back to fourteenth-century England. Opening Nov. 21.

THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE
Guillermo del Toro ("Cronos") directed this horror film set in an orphanage during the Spanish Civil War. With Marisa Paredes and Federico Luppi. In Spanish. Opening Nov. 21.

IN THE BEDROOM
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 23.

JUNG (WAR) IN THE LAND OF THE MUJAHEDDIN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 23. (Cinema Village.)

OUT COLD
Rival groups of snowboarders fight for supremacy on the local mountain in this comedy directed by Brendan and Emmett Malloy. Opening Nov. 21.

SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK
Ed Burns wrote and directed this ensemble drama about interconnecting love affairs. With Heather Graham, Stanley Tucci, and Brittany Murphy. Opening Nov. 21.

SPY GAME
An action picture in which a veteran C.I.A. officer (Robert Redford) nearing retirement tries to rescue his estranged protégé (Brad Pitt). Tony Scott directed. Opening Nov. 21.

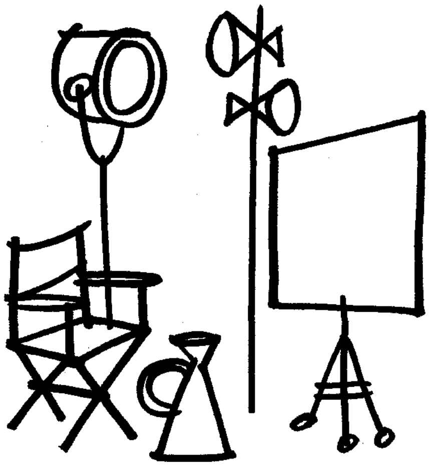
THE WAY WE LAUGHED
Gianni Amelio ("Lamerica") directed this drama set in postwar Italy about two Sicilian brothers who emigrate to Turin. With Enrico Lo Verso. In Italian. Opening Nov. 21. (Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

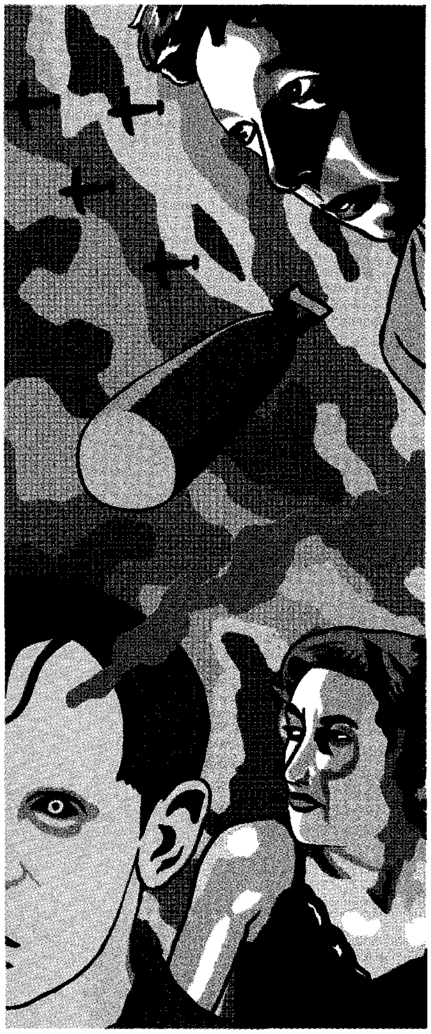
AMÉLIE
A waifish Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it—not to mention its dangerous surfeit of sweetness—appears to have touched a universal nerve. (In truth, the saga of the movie's success is more telling than anything in the movie itself.) Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this new movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Paris.)

BOMBAY EUNUCH
A fascinating documentary by the filmmaker Alexandra Shiva about the plight of a group of impoverished eunuchs in India. The film eloquently conveys the day-to-day challenges of a small marginalized community where prostitution and panhandling are the basic means of survival. The contradictory nature of their lives—they walk the poverty-stricken streets in brightly colored saris and perfect makeup (imagine Diana Ross easing on down the road as Ma Joad in "The Grapes of Wrath")—is vivid and jarring. The movie never condescends—it dignifies these social outcasts with a street-smart focus on their bravery and humor. In English, Hindi, and Tamal.—*Bruce Diones* (The Screening Room.)

DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE
A movie for divorced dads who want to believe that their ex-wife married a monster. John Travolta plays, rather too sincerely, the father who believes his son (a chronic liar) when the son says he's witnessed his new stepdad commit a murder. Imagine a thriller so predictable that it's over before it starts.—*B.D.* (First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)



THE ELEPHANT MAN
The well-known story of John Merrick, the grievously eminent Victorian who is sometimes said to have been the ugliest man who ever lived, is told by David Lynch in this 1980 film with such grace and imagination that it becomes a tale of a terrible enchantment. Inside Merrick's misshapen body is an astonishingly sweet-souled gentleman of his era. There's something indefinably erotic going on here; it's submerged in the movie's rhythm and in the director's whole way of seeing. Scene by scene, you don't know what to expect; you're seeing something new—subconscious material stirring within the format of a conventional narrative. John Hurt plays Merrick, and Anthony Hopkins is Frederick Treves, the doctor who rescues him from the world of sideshows.—*Pauline Kael* (Cinema Classics; Nov. 21-24.)



Guillermo del Toro's "The Devil's Backbone," opening November 21.

THE ENDURANCE
A documentary about Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914 Antarctic expedition—a triumph of human will, or, more literally, the ultimate example of sang-froid. Caroline Alexander wrote the concise narration, and the director, George Butler, takes care to etch the awesome physical realities at the bottom of the world. His camera hovers inches above the frigid dark-blue waters and pans across a merciless horizon of frozen sea. Frank Hurley, the expedition's original documentarian, performed a small miracle by saving his photo negatives and film reels. The scenes he shot of the men exercising the Canadian sled dogs and working furiously to extract their trapped ship are the gem within the film's careful casing.—*Michael Agger* (59th Street East Cinema and Village East Cinemas.)

ENTER THE DRAGON
Bruce Lee and John Saxon in a kung-fu movie that's a good-natured example of the pleasures of schlock art. There's so much going on that the whole history of movies seems to be recapitulated in scrambled form. It could be billed as the movie with a thousand climaxes.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 24.)

FAT GIRL
A pitiful title for this gnawing French film, directed by Catherine Breillat, about the love-hate relationship between two teen-age sisters—one beautiful, the other not—during a family summer vacation. For the most part, the film is an artful examination of first love and sexual awakenings, but the tender, quiet scenes have a restless play beneath them. There's a psychological tension to Breillat's neutral style, and she employs it in an unnerving way whether she's filming a graphic love scene, a long drive, or a short, sharp burst of violence. In French.—*B.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

GREED
Rick Schmidlin uses Erich von Stroheim's original script and production stills to expand the existing, hundred-and-forty-minute version of von Stroheim's truncated 1925 masterpiece by about a hundred minutes. The result is astonishing, conjuring a forgotten universe of cinematic possibilities. The burly San Francisco dentist McTeague (Gibson Gowland), his buddy Marcus (Jean Hersholt), and McTeague's miserly wife (Zasu Pitts) still enact a gold-fuelled revenge spiral that culminates in the most appropriate setting imaginable: Death Valley. But in von Stroheim's restored plan, this trio occupies the middle of a spectrum encompassing, on one end, the scabrous venality of a gold-mad junk dealer and a maid and, on the other, the sweetly furtive late-life romance of a veterinarian and his next-door neighbor. What's clearer than ever is that von Stroheim's combination of actual locations, veracious action, and novelistic details anticipated masterpieces like Luchino Visconti's "The Leopard" (1963) and Francesco Rosi's "Christ Stopped at Eboli" (1979)—movies that encompass entire cross-sections of society yet also render character with startling intimacy.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 24-25.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE
J. K. Rowling, having drawn even reluctant readers back to the lonely pleasure of a book, is now witnessing their dispersal; her creation, Harry Potter, has finally arrived onscreen, and with him comes a slew of merchandise and, soon enough, a video game—as if reading did not promise vivid interactions of its own. The movie is exactly what you would expect: spirited, efficient, glazed with effects, and almost servile in its fidelity to the novel. Harry

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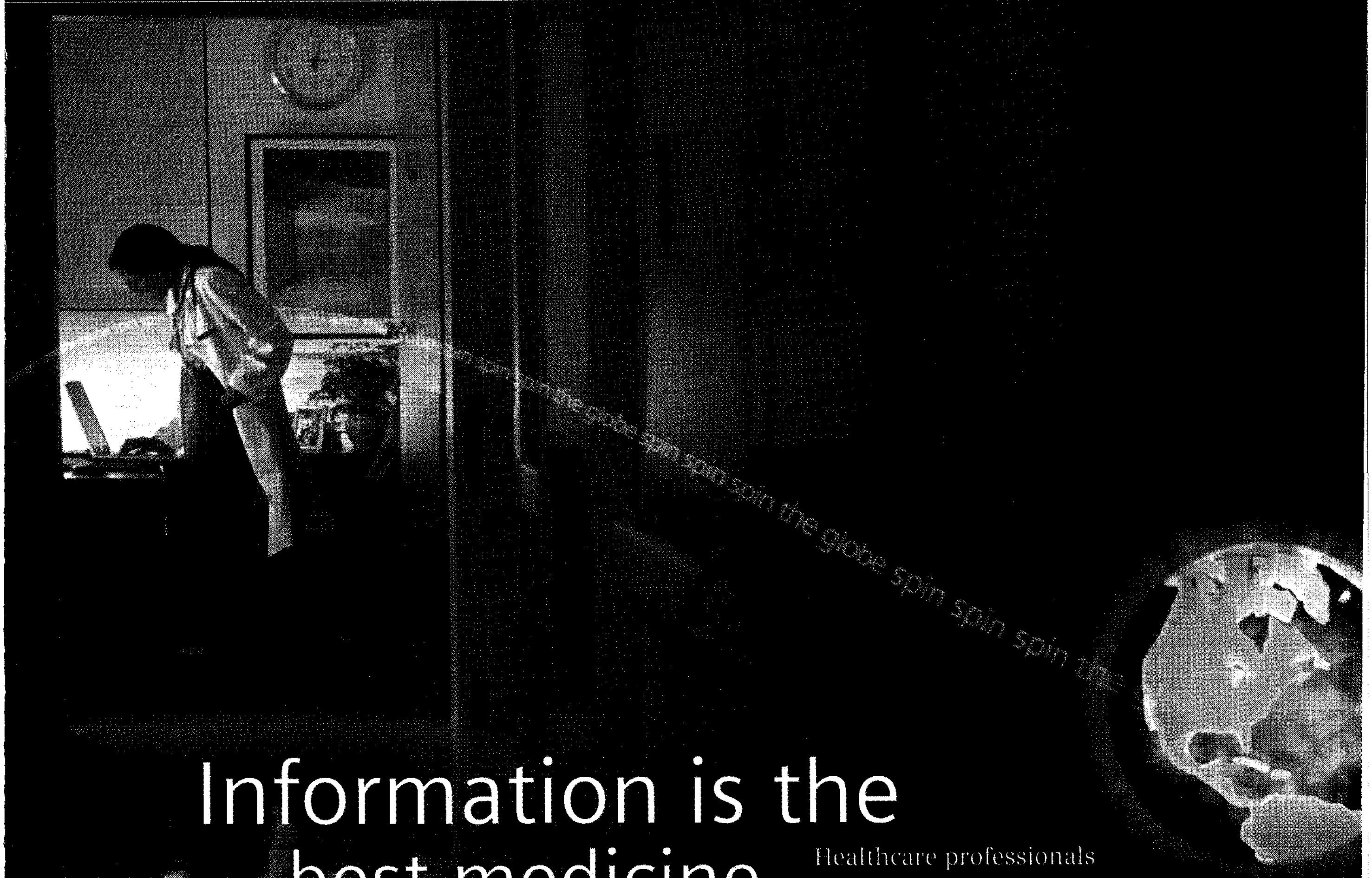
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is played by Daniel Radcliffe, who, though a touch too old for the part, fills it with unfazed amiability; more successful still, perhaps, are Emma Watson and Rupert Grint, enjoying themselves as his sidekicks. A roll call of British actors infests the staff at Hogwarts School: Richard Harris, Maggie Smith, and Alan Rickman, with the already well-built Robbie Coltrane finding fresh girth as the rumbustious Hagrid. The movie takes its time—the director, Chris Columbus, and his screenwriter, Steve Kloves, seem most interested in portraying good companionship—and yet the final half-hour feels rushed and unarousing. Even before the film opened, the grosses were assured, and yet, for all the magic—the broomsticks, the bank staffed by goblins, and the troll in the bathroom—the work itself remains oddly unmagical, grounded in mortal fun.—*A.L.* (11/19/01) (Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HEIST

David Mamet's debonair safecracking movie is high-grade fun all the way through. As Joe Moore, a steely but convivial Boston thief, the great Gene Hackman dispels the Mamet chill (the portentous and equivocal atmosphere of such films as "House of Games" and "The Spanish Prisoner"). Hackman, age seventy-one, sends waves of energy through the entire production. Mamet plays his usual games—the characters are always turning the tables on one another—but this time he's much more involved in the physical life of what he's showing us. The cast includes Rebecca Pidgeon as a hipster moll; Delroy Lindo as Hackman's loyal old friend; Ricky Jay as a witty utility man who is so quick that he can, without preparation, throw himself in front of a moving car in order to divert the police. Only Sam Rockwell, as a young sleaze, is a disappointment.—*David Denby* (11/12/01) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

INTIMACY

Jay (Mark Rylance) and Claire (Kerry Fox) meet for sex every Wednesday in Jay's unfurnished London flat. Photographed in a ghostly light, the two grapple silently; their lovemaking is more about hunger and release than pleasure. The director Patrice Chéreau, adapting stories by Hanif Kureishi, seems to be attempting a generational portrait of Londoners in their thirties who are not quite gifted or single-minded enough to fulfill their dreams—failed musicians, painters, and actors who have drifted into wretchedness and bickering. The movie has some fine moods of bafflement and rage, but much of it is garbled and rather vague. The camera, right on top of the actors, seems to be chasing something that it can't find. With Timothy Spall as Claire's faithful husband, by far the most fully created character in the movie.—*D.D.* (10/29/01) (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

K-PAX

As a creature named Prot who may have dropped in from another planet, Kevin Spacey has a good moment with a dog, kneeling down with the frisky beast and interpreting its barks as speech. But that's about it. What should have been spooky fun is mainly soft-brained and painstakingly earnest. Jeff Bridges, looking about thirty pounds heavier than usual, plays a workaholic psychiatrist who cannot figure out whether Prot is truly an alien or just a head case. Meanwhile, Prot liberates all the bedraggled psychotics who live in the mental ward with him. The director, Iain Softley, uses the lunatics as a kind of comic chorus—an offensive idea masquerading as daring humanism.—*D.D.* (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

LIFE AS A HOUSE

Kevin Kline gives a persuasive and ornery performance as a middle-aged failure who devotes himself to building a dream house on the golden cliffs of California. He plays an architect who doesn't think much of himself but is determined to follow his own path, and Kline's face is lit by anger in ways that we've never seen from him in movies. Much of the picture, until the tear-dripping conclusion, is charming. As the house goes up, various people drop in to saw a few boards, flirt, or make mischief. Kristin Scott Thomas, relaxing onscreen for the first time, plays George's rueful ex-wife. Hayden Christensen is his sixteen-year-old son—pierced, eyeshadowed, and drugged.—*D.D.* (10/29/01) (Chelsea West, Cinema II, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LOLA

This first film by Jacques Demy, released in 1961, is like an adolescent's dream of romance, formed from old movies. Lola (Anouk Aimée) is simple and open, an untalented and not too bright cabaret dancer, a vulnerable, sentimental girl. The film gives us life rose-tinted—a lovely, quirky mixture of French-movie worldliness circa 1939 and the innocent cheerfulness of the Gene Kelly–Frank Sinatra M-G-M musicals of the forties, with their generous, shy sailors, looking for love. Characters suddenly get rich or are stranded on an island, and Lola's dreams come true—and not just her dreams but her illusions. In French.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Nov. 21-27.)

THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

The latest Coen-brothers project is shot in smooth, glittering monochrome: a calmly told tale of murder without mayhem. We are on the brink of the nineteen-fifties, with its distinctive fears and badges of honor: Big Dave (James Gandolfini) can still lay claim to a good war record, while his wife, in all honesty, reports a visit from outer space. Billy Bob Thornton plays Ed, a barber living quietly with his wife (Frances McDormand) in northern California. He tries his hand at blackmail, and the plan misfires—justice catches up with him in the end, although, even then, he is the wrong man. Unfortunately, Thornton is so cool in the role that you simply don't believe that he would pass unnoticed. The whole film has the air of a clever, unthrilling conceit—a guided tour of film noir, without the sweat and compulsions of the real thing. With Tony Shalhoub, stealing the picture as a lawyer deluxe.—*A.L.* (11/5/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

MONSTERS, INC.

A thoroughly charming movie from the artists and storytellers at Pixar which wins you over with its jazzy, retro title sequence and then introduces the pun-filled world of Monstropolis, where creatures of all description toil in factories, collecting the screams of children. The visual invention is on par with Pixar's previous effort, "Toy Story 2," but the crazy quilt of cultural references and back-door subversiveness of that movie gets toned down for something more sugary. John Goodman and Billy Crystal give voice to the two heroes, but the gold star goes to John Ratzenberger (Cliff from "Cheers") for his homespun Abominable Snowman.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinema, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

MULHOLLAND DRIVE

A woman wanders away from a car wreck and into a strange house. Little old people scurry under the foot of a door, squeaking like mice. Yes, it's a David Lynch project. This one began life as a TV pilot; you can just imagine the aghast faces of the network executives as they saw what they had commissioned. In the event, the elongated weirdness, stretching to two and a half hours, feels discomfortingly at home on the larger screen; if you ever wanted to see an epic horror soap, this is what it would look like. Many established Lynch motifs are in place, most of them summoned from one corner or another of the nineteen-fifties: the innocent blonde (Naomi Watts), the baffled brunette (Laura Elena Harring), the clueless cop (Robert Forster). Addicts of the director will tie themselves in knots trying to pick the lock of the film; the rest

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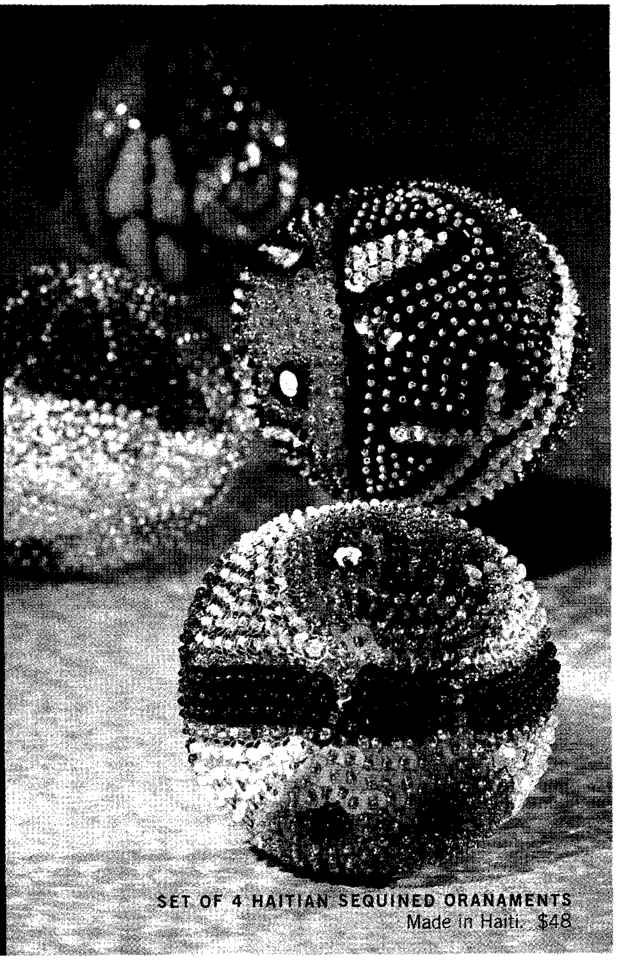
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of us can lie back and enjoy the spooking. With Justin Theroux and, as a tough old landlady, Ann Miller. Yes, *that* Ann Miller.—*A.L.* (10/8/01) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE ONE

The "X-Files" alumnus James Wong and his partner Glen Morgan concoct a pointless martial-arts film for Jet Li that even the Rock wouldn't touch. (He backed out to do a prequel to "The Mummy Returns.") Li's considerable acrobatic skills are hampered by the overdone computer-generated effects—his performance is humorless and stunt-driven. The screenplay is some gobbledygook about parallel worlds that lacks the imagination Wong and Morgan brought to their previous movie, "Final Destination."—*B.D.* (Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

PADRE PADRONE

The Taviani brothers, who wrote and directed this film version of Gavino Ledda's 1974 autobiography, fuse political commitment and artistic commitment into stylized passion. Ledda's story is about how he was enslaved as a child, imprisoned in a sheepfold, and forced to tend the family flock, and about how he fought his way out of the isolation and silence. The spirit of the film isn't naturalistic—it's animistic. Though made in 1977 for Italian television, this extraordinary work—pungent and carnal, and in faintly psychedelic Romanesque color—took the two top prizes at Cannes. In Italian.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 23.)

ROPE

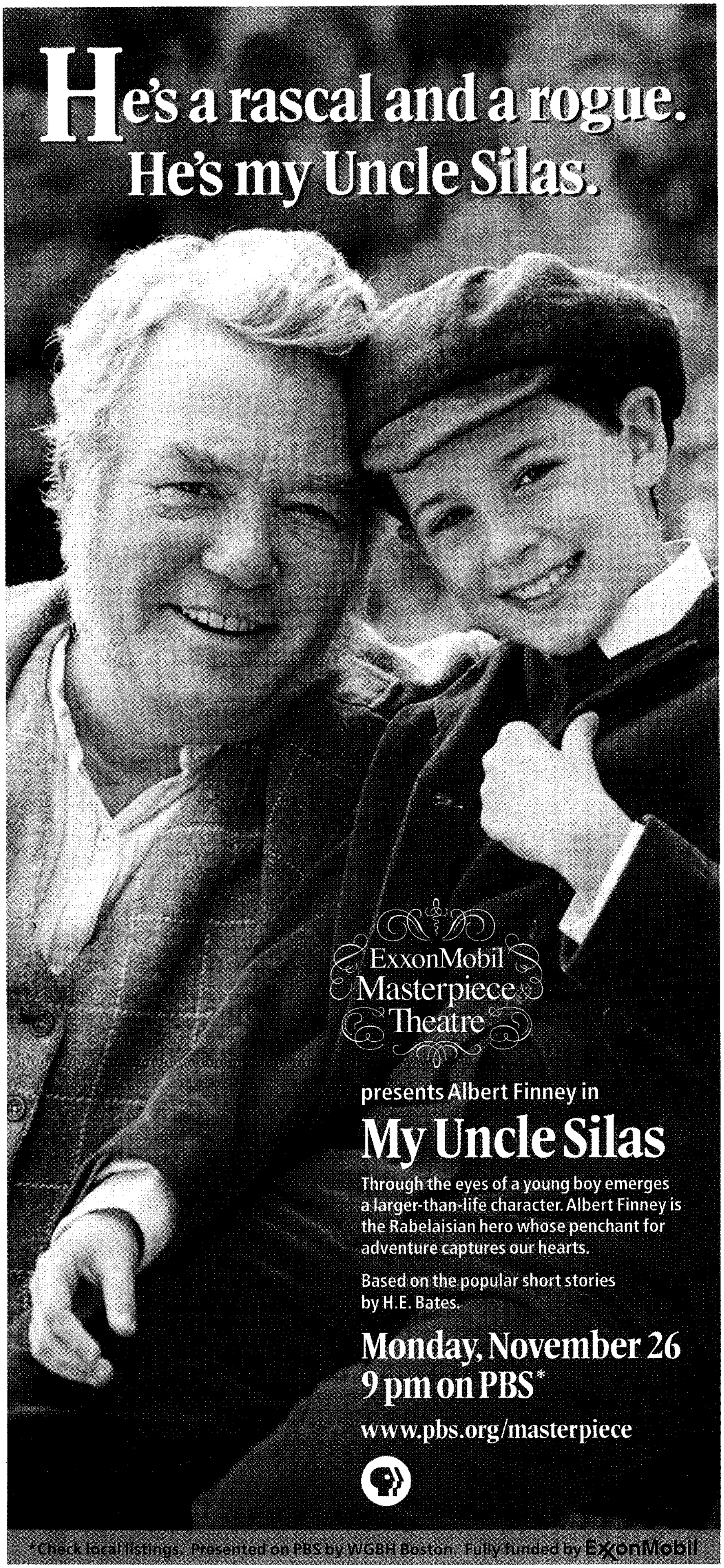
In this atypical 1948 Alfred Hitchcock movie, the brilliant homosexual thrill-killers Leopold and Loeb become Brandon (John Dall) and Philip (Farley Granger), Manhattan dandies who murder a member of their social set and dump the corpse into a chest that becomes the centerpiece of a dinner party. The guests include the dead man's family, fiancée, and romantic rival, as well as the unholy duo's former prep-school teacher (James Stewart), who has unwittingly inspired them by preaching Nietzsche. The action unfolds tensely in real time—the eighty minutes of the crime, the party, and the aftermath. Hitchcock shot the film in intricate ten-minute takes, editing only to connect them.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 21-22.)

SHALLOW HAL

The Farrelly brothers try to be sensitive and miss the mark big time. The devilish-looking comedian Jack Black, as a sexist loser who wants a physically perfect woman, receives a mystical hypnosis from the (literally) gigantic self-help guru Tony Robbins. While the rest of the world registers an unhappy three-hundred-pound blonde, Black sees a slender Gwyneth Paltrow, and his apparent generosity draws other women to him, too. The Farrelly brothers constantly make the jokes about fat women that they praise Black for not making, thereby reinforcing the very distaste that the movie is ostensibly trying to overthrow. Black is funny when he's dancing or bopping along the street, but the script calls for him to be crass and incapable of noticing anything, and Jason Alexander as his sidekick—an even more hopeless loser—screams and waves his arms endlessly. Paltrow, however, is lovely; when she plays the unhappy big girl (she's encased in layers of padding), her forlorn hopefulness is heartbreaking.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

TAPE

Richard Linklater, who directed the current feature "Waking Life," turns out a nifty adaptation of a single-set play by Stephen Belber (who also wrote the screenplay). It all takes place, in real time, in a dreary East Lansing motor hotel. An unusually animated Ethan Hawke plays a smart young drug dealer reuniting with an old high-school buddy (Robert Sean Leonard) who has become a film director. Leonard's character is the kind of pompous success who wants people to think well of him but



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may actually be a bit of a louse underneath; back in high school, he took the drug dealer's girlfriend away and may or may not have date-raped her. As the two men grapple, the girlfriend (Uma Thurman)—now an assistant district attorney—shows up in the motel room. You can see the theatrical manipulations coming, but you are held by the knife thrusts of aggression and the reversals at the end.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TRAINING DAY

A synthetically plotted melodrama, but still it has power and depth. Denzel Washington is Alonzo Harris, a decorated Los Angeles narcotics cop who breaks in his new partner, Jake Hoyt (Ethan Hawke), a talented rookie from the Valley. Alonzo bullies and taunts the young man, teaching him the brutal wisdom of the street; Jake, who is highly moral, eager to impress, and ambitious, is hurt and baffled. It takes us a while to realize that what seem like random incidents on the street are really the outer edges of a malaise—the dishonesty of Alonzo and the other members of his undercover unit. Despite some trashy and conventionally violent scenes, the movie is psychologically interesting: the dominating and witty Alonzo wants the respect of the young man he's trying to corrupt. Washington is tormented and brilliant; it's his best performance so far.—*D.D.* (10/15/01) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

WAKING LIFE

Like many revolutionary films, it has its longueurs, but Richard Linklater's first animated work, a painterly extension of reality, is astoundingly lovely and touching. He shot the material as a live-action feature and then turned the footage over to a team of animation artists, headed by Bob Sabiston, who enhanced and decorated each sequence. The resulting interplay between words and animation is both haunting and startlingly witty. What we see is an unformed young man (Wiley Wiggins) walking around Austin, Texas, where he encounters the coffeehouse Kierkegaards and ecstatically articulate bums who populated Linklater's initial triumph, "Slacker." (Most of the participants are local celebrities, not actors.) The young man thinks he's awake, but actually he's caught in an endless dream. Since the talk he hears is directed toward themes of reverie, apprehension, and death, we begin to wonder, after a while, if we are not witnessing his last moments of consciousness.—*D.D.* (11/12/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

"Out Cold," a snowboarding comedy, opens November 21.

MARK TODD

ALSO PLAYING

KING OF THE JUNGLE
Angelika Film Center.
NOVOCAINE
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.
RIDING IN CARS WITH BOYS
Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.
THE TOWN IS QUIET
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
TREMBLING BEFORE G-D
Film Forum.
VA SAVOIR
Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
THE WASH
84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Nov. 24-25 at 2: A reconstructed print of Erich von Stroheim's silent film "Greed" (†). ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 24-25 at 6:30: "Brazil" (1985, Terry Gilliam).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Nov. 23-Dec. 7: The Ninth Annual African Diaspora Film Festival.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Nov. 21-22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Rope" (†). ♦ Nov. 23 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Vertigo" (1958, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Nov. 24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Enter the Dragon" (†). ♦ Nov. 25 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Sword of Doom" (1966, Kihachi Okamoto; in Japanese). ♦ Nov. 26 at 6:50 and 9:10: "The Devil's Plaything: Fantastic Myths and Fairytales," an installment of the American prewar avant-garde-cinema series. ♦ Nov. 27 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "M" (1931, Fritz Lang; in German.)

CINEMA CLASSICS

332 E. 11th St. (677-5368)—Nov. 21-24: "The Elephant Man" (†). ♦ Nov. 25-27: "Wings of Desire" (1988, Wim Wenders; in German).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Nov. 21-27 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: A new print of Jacques Demy's "Lola" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

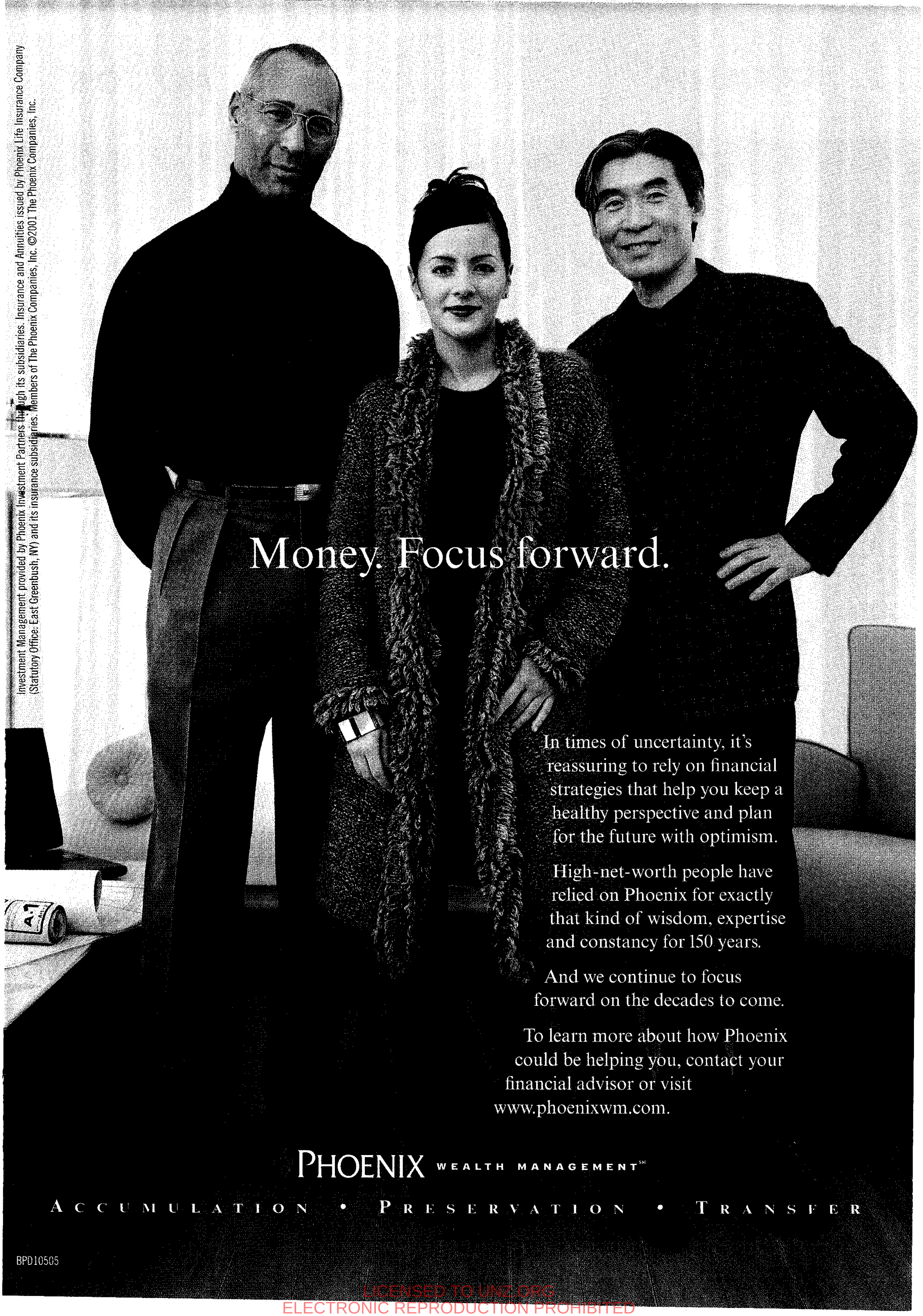
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A tribute to Jeanne Moreau. Nov. 27 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Bay of Angels" (1963, Jacques Demy; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Nov. 30: A Paolo and Vittorio Taviani retrospective. All films are in Italian. Nov. 23 at 2:30: "Allonsanfan" (1975). ♦ Nov. 23 at 6: "St. Michael Had a Rooster" (1971). ♦ Nov. 23 at 8: "Padre Padrone" (†). ♦ Nov. 24 at 1:30 and Nov. 27 at 6: "Kaos" (1984). ♦ Nov. 24 at 5 and Nov. 27 at 2:30: "You Laugh" (1998). ♦ Nov. 25 at noon and Nov. 26 at 6: "Night Sun" (1990). ♦ Nov. 25 at 2:30: "Elective Affinities" (1996). ♦ Nov. 25 at 5 and Nov. 26 at 2:30: "Good Morning, Babylon" (1987).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Dec. 6: "Silence to Sound." Nov. 21 at 1, 5, and 9 and Nov. 22 at 3 and 7:30: "The Bat Whispers" (1929, Roland West). ♦ Nov. 21 at 3 and 7 and Nov. 22 at 1, 5, and 9:15: "M" (1931, Fritz Lang; in German). ♦ Nov. 23 at 4 and 7 and Nov. 24 at 1 and 3:30: Buster Keaton and Fatty Arbuckle shorts, accompanied by the Alloy Orchestra. ♦ Nov. 24 at 6:30 and Nov. 26 at 4 and 8:15: "Hallelujah" (1929, King Vidor). ♦ Nov. 24 at 9 and Nov. 26 at 2 and 6:15: "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Nov. 25 at 2 and 6 and Nov. 27 at 3: "Sunrise" (1927, F. W. Murnau). ♦ Nov. 25 at 4 and 8 and Nov. 27 at 1: "City Girl" (1930, Murnau).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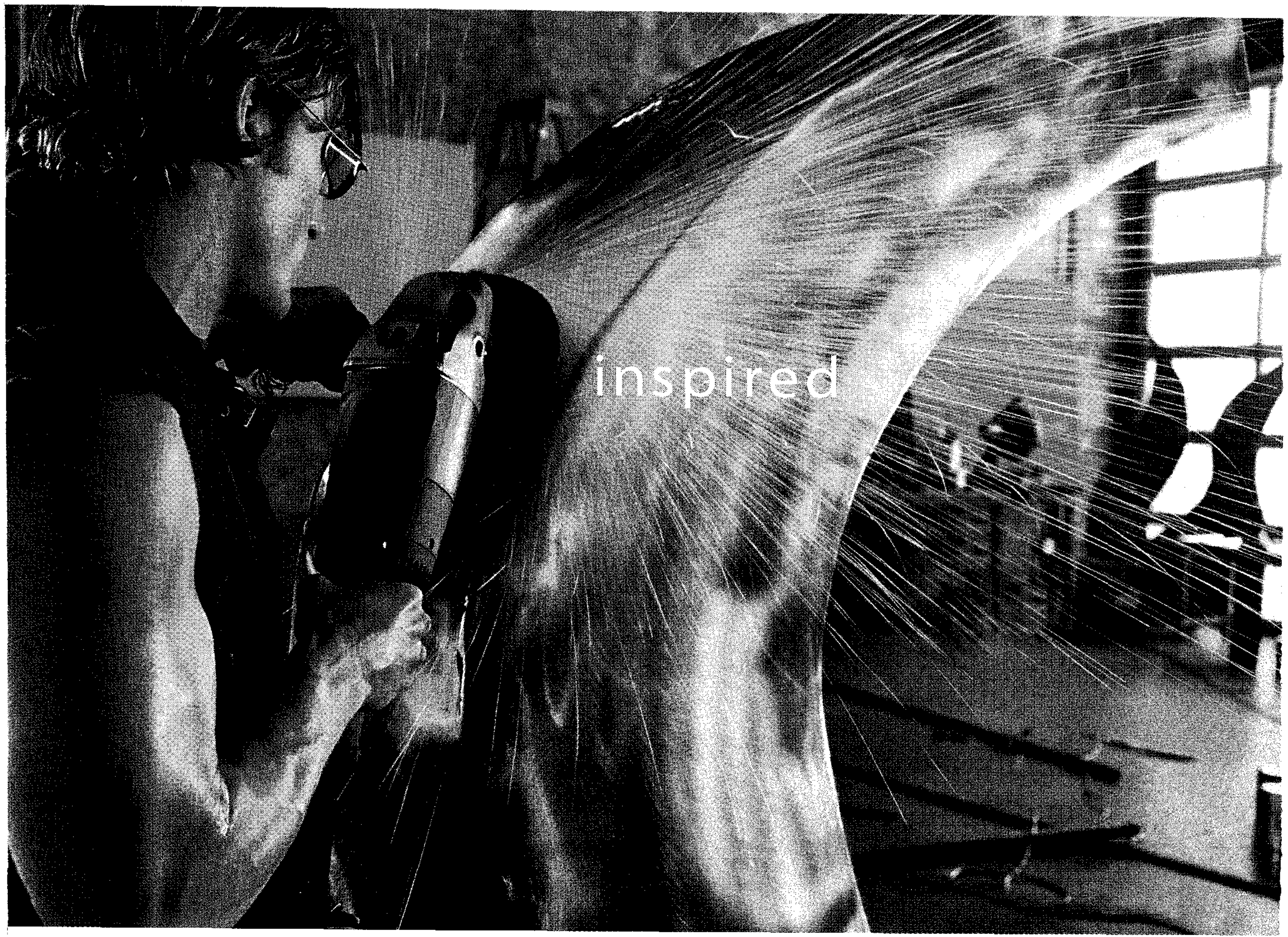

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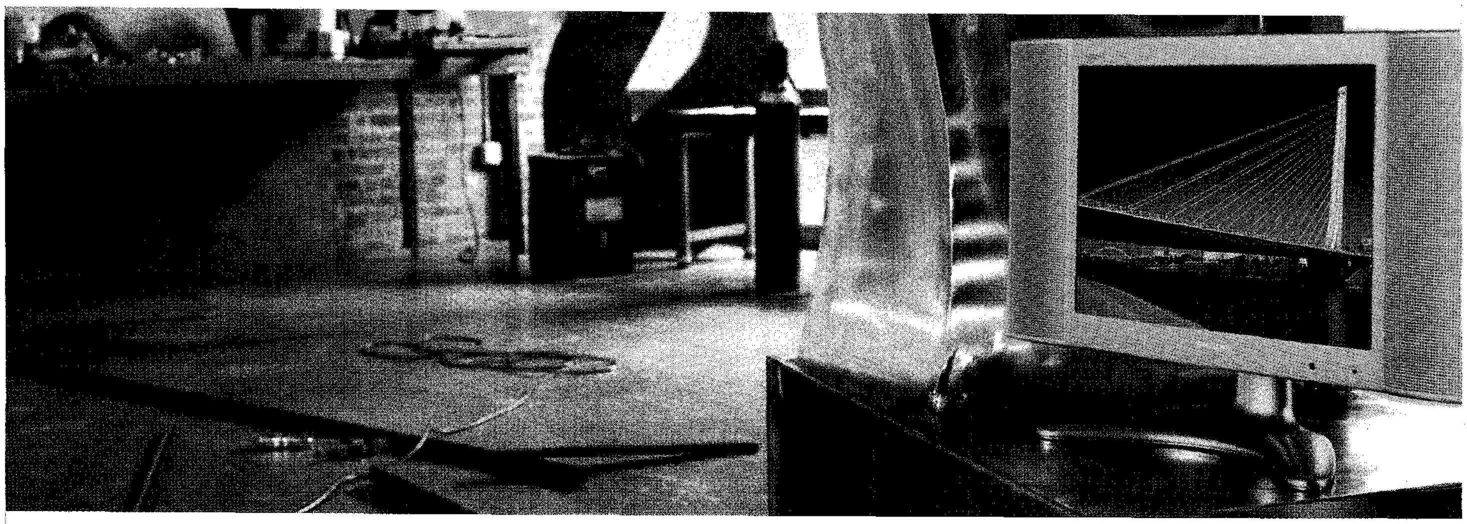

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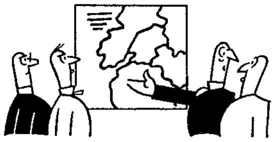
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
AFTER KABUL

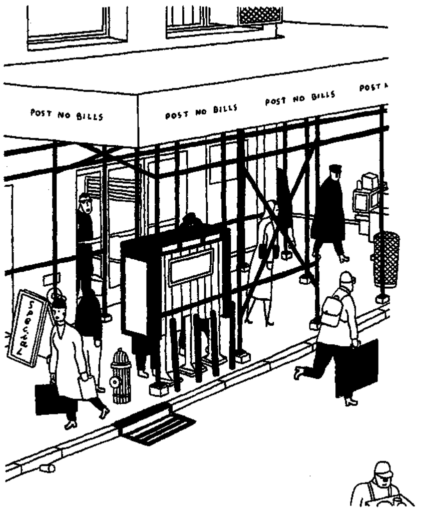


Wars begin with warnings from wars past. This is a natural reflex not only of commentators but of generals and politicians, too. When it came to Afghanistan, we readily summoned the memories of the British and Russian experience there—the cruelty and the snows, the slaughters and the chastening retreats. In countless feature articles, veterans of the Soviet Army testified to their superpower humiliation, which led to their final flight to Termez. Kipling, who has not enjoyed such a revival since his adaptation by Walt Disney's animators, has been endlessly quoted by way of jocular and bloody-minded warning:

> When you're wounded and left on
> Afghanistan's plains,
> And the women come out to cut up what
> remains,
> Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your
> brains
> An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

When the bombing began on the sunny Sunday afternoon of October 7th, the first explosions were followed by murmurs of public concern: the campaign was too fast, it was too slow; it was too harsh, it was too squeamish. An anxious rhetorical thread linked the follies of the Great Game to the quagmire of Vietnam and the unresolved questions of the Gulf War. Then came last week. Whatever the shortcomings of the American-led campaign may have been and might yet be, the string of successes was a cause for celebration. The images of liberation in Kabul—of singing in the streets, of beards being shorn, of kites flying—were unambiguously thrilling. This was a significant victory in a just cause. It was also, to be sure, another chapter in a civil conflict of many years' duration, and there were, at first, some ugly instances of revenge. But these instances appear to have been relatively few, and it is essential that they remain few. It is also essential to remember that the Taliban regime was one whose principal entertainment, sponsored by the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, was the execution of adulterers at the local soccer stadium.



Events are moving so quickly that it is not inconceivable that, sometime between deadline and publication, American Special Forces or Northern Alliance troops will also "liberate" the Taliban's benefactor, Osama bin Laden. Let it be so. In any event, President Bush's cautionary note during his address to Congress eight weeks ago—"This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with the decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion"—remains as apt today as when he delivered it. The danger of an unbridled celebration is the ease with which it could slide into the euphoric illusion that the liberation of Kabul is more than a critical moment in a long and complicated story. Now that the Taliban are in disarray, the work of nation building, once anathema to the fledgling Administration's world view, becomes unavoidable; it is a task involving unpredictable and willful players.

Any attempt to achieve even the most rudimentary stability in Afghanistan cannot rely purely on American diplomacy, security, or aid. There is no doubt that in the very short run the ruthless American-led pursuit of the leaders of Al Qaeda and the Taliban is indispensable. But no Afghans—to say nothing of the volatile political constituencies in Pakistan and other Muslim countries—would tolerate a situation in which the United States imposes, or is seen to impose, a new political order on their country. The effort has to be Afghan with multinational support.

As some within the Administration, along with Richard Holbrooke, the former American Ambassador to the United Nations, have pointed out, U.N. peacekeeping forces in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Somalia failed because they were lumberingly slow and bureaucratic, whereas multinational forces backed by the U.N. have enjoyed some success. The multinational force in East Timor, led by the Australians, mobilized quickly and established a modicum of stability where there had been only chaos and violence. The United States cannot lead such a force, but a relatively strong Muslim country such as Jordan, Indonesia, or even Turkey, which is a member of NATO, would have a good chance of maintaining peace while a U.N.-led operation begins to distribute aid efficiently (the air drops have not worked) and, even more difficult, tries to draw together Afghanistan's various political factions and tribes. There is no underestimating the job: Afghanistan is bigger than France; East Timor is about the size of Connecticut.

The transition from an American-led attack to a multinational security effort will still leave the Administration with a great deal to do. The terror attacks of September 11th focussed our attention on problems that we were only faintly aware of or had ignored entirely: a degraded level of domestic and foreign intelligence; the threat of chemical and biological weapons; the presence of terror cells from Tashkent to Jersey City. At the same time, American diplomacy is faced with a multitude of problems that, it is fair to say, were hardly the obsessions of last year's political campaign: the instability of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan; the explosive clash in Kashmir; the nuclearization of the Middle East. In Afghanistan itself, the United States will have to make sure not only that the Taliban are thoroughly defeated but also that the Northern Alliance does not become so emboldened by its victories that it refuses to share power with other forces in the country.

When the Bush Administration took office, ten months ago, some of its ideologues, especially in the Pentagon and the National Security Council, sneered at the United Nations. Multilateralism was considered suspect, soft. But the President has changed in these past months. One of the most significant ways he has done so has been in his readiness at times to change his mind.

—*David Remnick*

ROCKAWAY POSTCARD
AFTER THE CRASH

At noon on Monday, November 12th, a Rockaway-bound A train was packed with news reporters and photographers. They hovered around the subway map, amazed by the route, which cuts, ferrylike, across the shallow waters of Jamaica Bay. It seems fair to assume that never before had a subway car traversing this stretch of Queens contained so many people talking on cellular phones. One person not on the phone was Jimmy Breslin, the newspaper columnist, who gazed out over the water toward the Rockaways. He carried a paperback edition of Balzac's "Lost Illusions" in his jacket pocket.

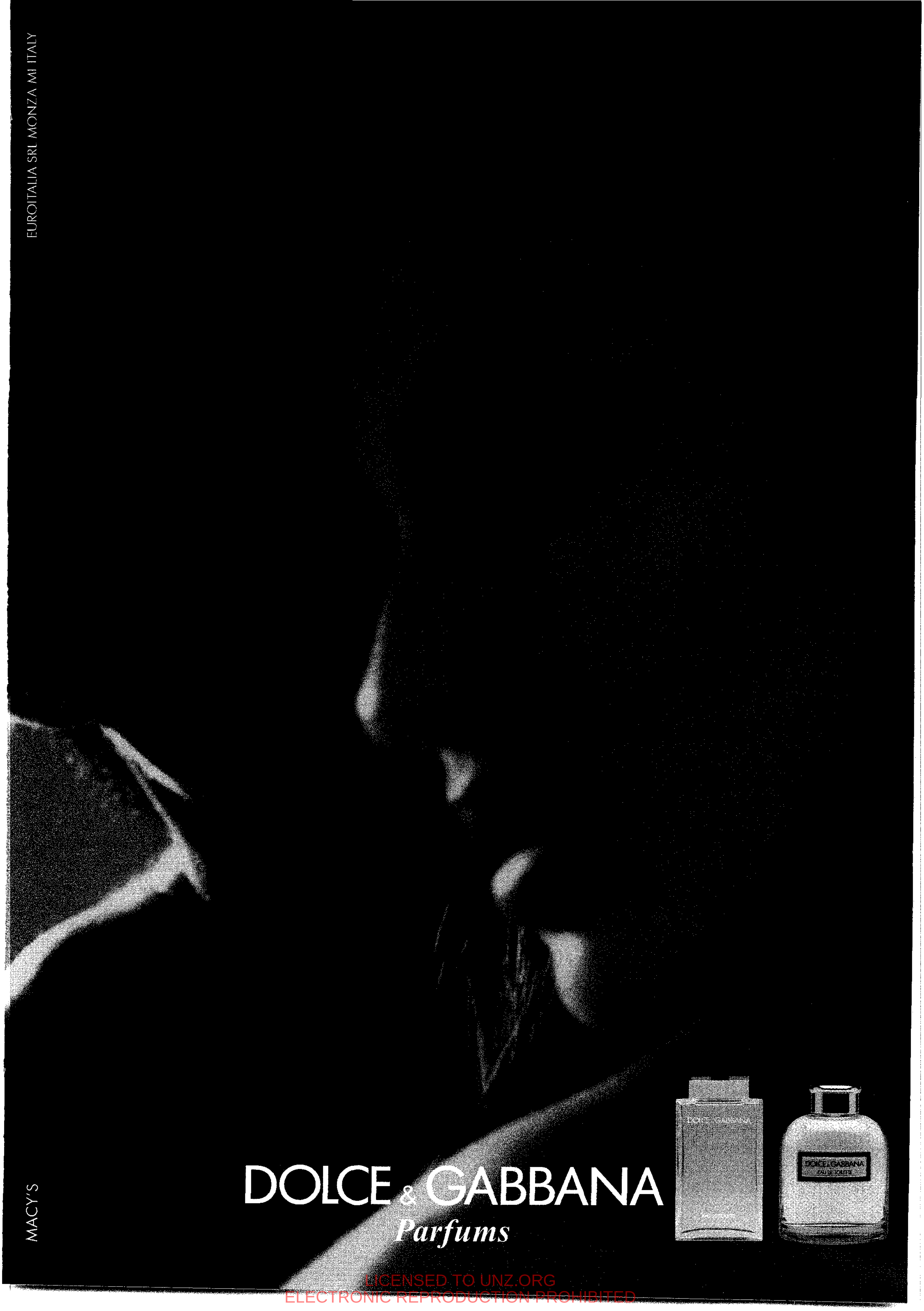
Hours before, American Airlines Flight 587 had crashed into Belle Harbor, Queens, a middle-class enclave on the Rockaway peninsula, killing everyone aboard and five people on the ground. Already, the passengers on the A train knew certain things: that many Belle Harbor residents were firefighters, that dozens and dozens of them had died at the World Trade Center on September 11th, that a good number of families were now doubly cursed. Within moments of the crash, local firefighters, on duty and off, had rushed to the scene to douse the blaze that had quickly consumed a swath of the neighborhood.

By the time the trainload arrived in Belle Harbor, the fire was pretty much out. On the crash's perimeter, out of sight of the wreckage, the scene—chaotic as it was, with firemen and fire trucks and cops milling and rushing about—seemed oddly composed. Conditioned by the immense spectacle and horror of September 11th, the media horde was unsure of itself, not quite capable of recalibrating its coverage to the gruesome but more ordinary subject at hand. This was a plane crash. The damage was done. The fire was out. Homes were gone. Loved ones were dead. Bodies were recovered, and bagged, and counted. The cops manned barricades. The network-TV vans found curb space. The correspondents found witnesses and backdrops. The Governor and the Mayor paid visits. The Scientologists distributed booklets. "It's a horrible thing," said a Belle Harbor man, who had been interviewed more than twenty times. At a certain point, there wasn't much more one could say.

A theory making the rounds among some of the younger Rockaway residents was that the neighborhood had been the target of a terrorist attack. On Wednesday, just before midnight, a teen-age boy was hanging out with some young women on a rusted swing set by the boardwalk. He had on a hooded sweatshirt and jeans. "Osama's out to get Rockaway," he said. He recalled that, at a benefit concert at Madison Square Garden last month, a firefighter named Michael Moran, whose brother had died on September 11th, had declared from the stage, "Osama bin Laden, you can kiss my royal Irish ass! And I live in Rockaway Beach." So Flight 587, the teen-ager surmised, had been steered into Belle Harbor as payback.

Others knew better. Rogers Irish House, on 116th Street, about half a mile from the crash site, is known as the bar where the retired guys go. Retired doesn't necessarily mean old in the Rockaways; cops and firefighters retire young. A few nights after the crash, the TV above the bar was tuned to the Fox News channel. The anchor was trying to get a former investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board to entertain the notion that Flight 587 might have been sabotaged; the investigator wasn't biting. Neither was Frank O'Rourke, a fifty-three-year-old retired investigator, who sat drinking a half pint of beer. "How about a little common sense?" he said. "People need to take a timeout, read some history. Get a book! This war is about economics. Let me give you an example: Would I like it if someone put an oil rig in Jamaica Bay? Would I like it if all the oil went to someone else? Would I like it if all the money went to someone else? No. In the Middle East, they're mad."

Raised in lower Manhattan, O'Rourke, who is tan and fairly fit, moved to Rockaway in 1978. His house, overlooking Jamaica Bay, has a garden full of tomatoes and corn, and a view of the Manhattan skyline. "Once you get a taste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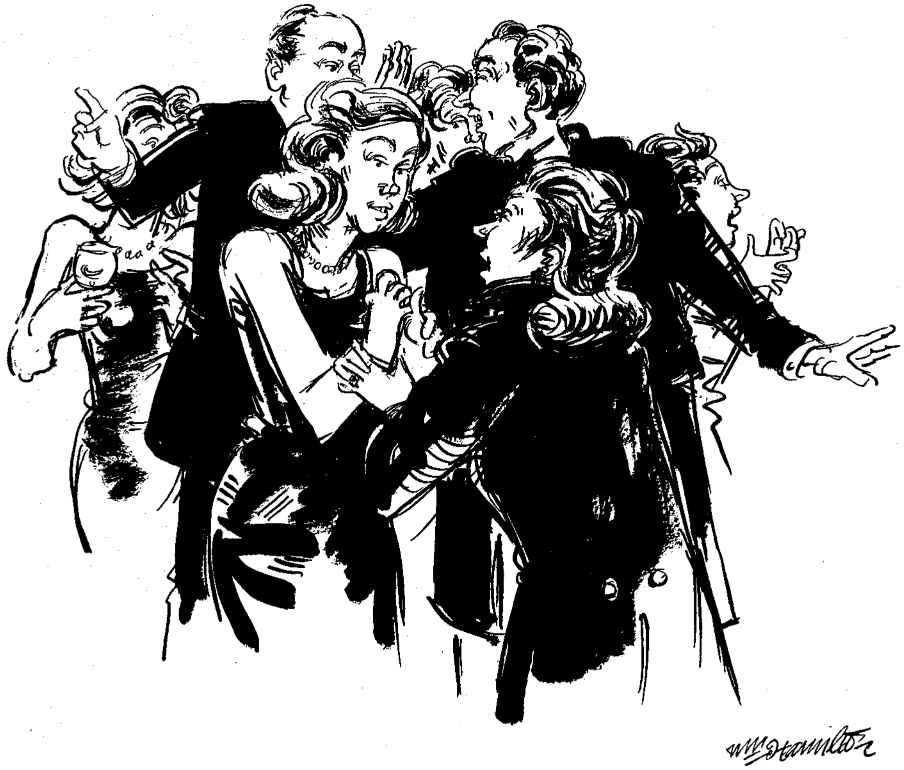


"And it was so typically brilliant of you to have invited an epidemiologist."

• •

of the salt water, you're here for life," he said.

O'Rourke lost a passel of old friends and sons of old friends on September 11th. "We were all lifeguards together," he said. "If they're hurting, I'm hurting." Among those hurting friends is Bernie Heeran, a former cop and firefighter, who owns the Harbor Light Pub, a block from the crash site. His son Charlie, a twenty-three-year-old trader at Cantor Fitzgerald, died in the World Trade Center attack. Then, last week, Chris Lawler, a law student and an occasional fill-in bartender at the Harbor Light, was killed, along with his mother, Kathy, by Flight 587. So were other friends and neighbors. After the crash, Heeran helped put out the fire, then turned the pub into a makeshift rescue center. That night, it stayed open late for a kind of Irish wake. Food and drink were free. Rescue workers drifted in and out. In the morning, staff and neighborhood residents came by and cleaned up. Many of them had to sneak past the police barricades to get to the bar.

"This is another tragedy. We're making the best of it," Heeran said last week. "But there's another two hundred and sixty people who died on that plane. After we put out the fire, we were stepping on the bodies without even knowing it. People keep asking, How do I feel? How do you *think* I feel?"

—Nick Paumgarten

LOOKING HOMEWARD
THE WOMEN

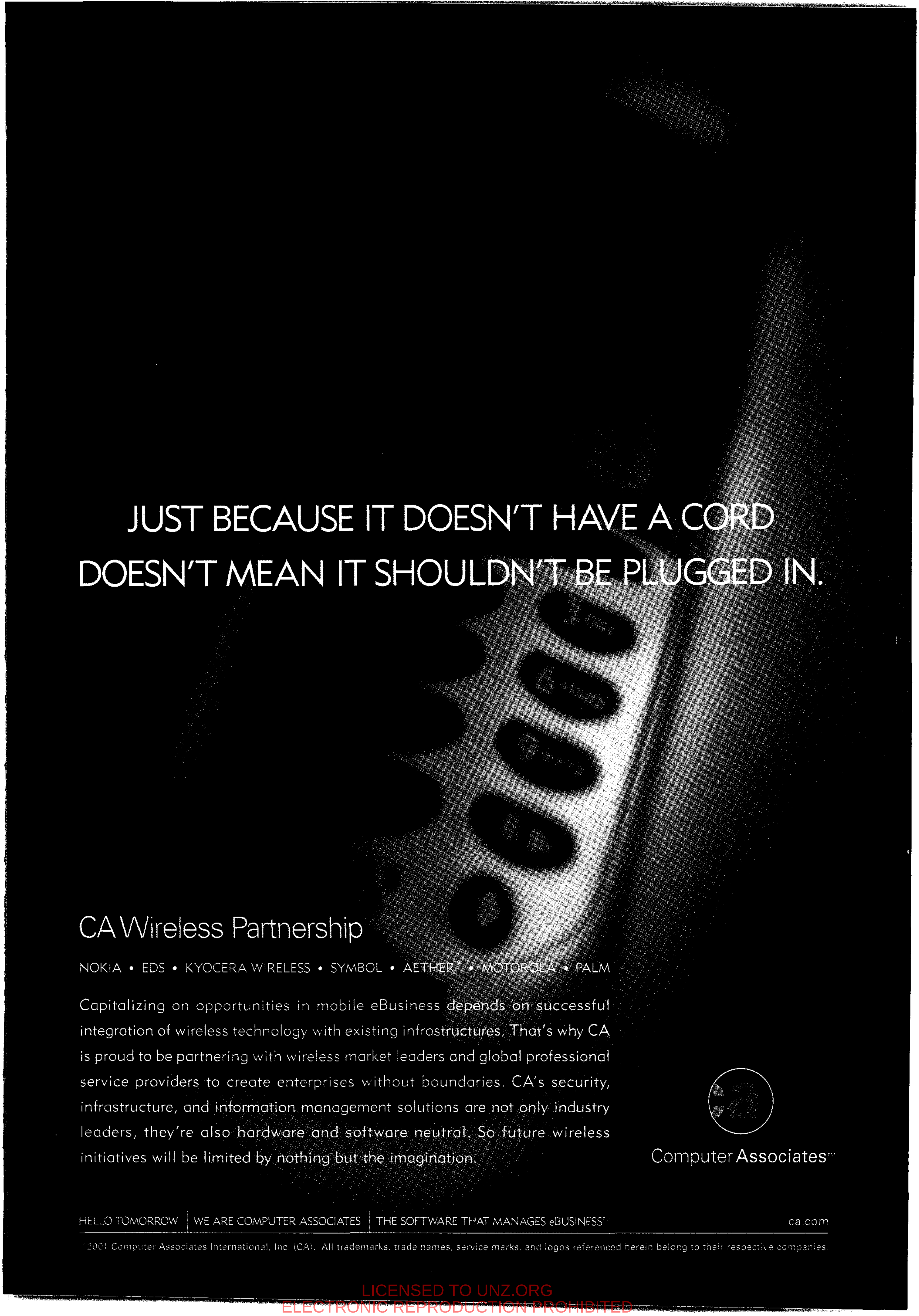
One recent evening, a few days before the troops of the Northern Alliance took Kabul, a cultural center in the East Village called A Gathering of the Tribes hosted a reception featuring art and poetry by Afghans living in New York. At the center, which occupies the second floor of a narrow brownstone tenement, a bedsheet served as the screen for a video projection, and an American flag as the scrim for a shadow dance, performed to tambourine and drum music, its backlit stripes suggesting prison bars.

Most of the artists at the reception were children of the Afghan diaspora. These are the sons and daughters of educated, liberal families who fled during or just after the Soviet invasion. "We've been in pain for twenty years," said Laimah Osman, the co-curator of the show. "After the World Trade Center, I went to dozens of candlelight vigils, and they helped. But it occurred to me that I'd never been to any organized public mourning for all the lost Afghan lives. So we put this evening together."

One of the participants was Zakarya Sherzad, a gentle-spoken forty-two-year-old writer and musician who read an elegy for the World Trade Center dead. In 1978, Sherzad was arrested and spent six months in a Kabul prison before Amnesty International arranged his passage to Switzerland. A few days after the reception, when news came of Kabul's fall, he expressed what appears to be a common feeling in the Afghan-American community: "I'm glad that a tyrannical government has been overthrown, but the vacuum—and the looming chaos—are very scary, because the last time the Northern Alliance came to power there was widespread rape, murder, and corruption, which paved the way for the Taliban takeover."

Shekaiba Wakili, a thirty-one-year-old photographer who had lent five portraits of Muslim women to the show, was celebrating the end of what, in the wake of September 11th, she had called the Taliban's "psychotic fundamentalism" and "gender apartheid." "I'm happy as an Afghan and proud as an American that we gave the Alliance the support it needed," she said. Fahima Danishgar, who is twenty-three, a graduate student at CUNY in political science, and one of the founders of a small feminist group called Women for Afghan Women, pointed out that after the liberation of Mazar-e-Sharif unveiled women were celebrating in the streets with men. "In Kabul, not many have dared come out yet—they're still too frightened—but I have a really good feeling about the change to come. Personally, I think that the Northern Alliance has learned its lesson. We'll see, though."

As news footage beamed out of the Afghan capital last week, one work of art that had been exhibited at the reception kept coming to mind: a documentary



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entitled "Kabul Kabul." The filmmaker, a young woman named Sedika Mojadidi, is the niece of a mujahideen resistance leader who returned to Afghanistan in 1996 with a video camera hidden under her burkha to record the experience of the country's starved and brutalized women. Among her subjects were two little girls in a drought-parched ditch outside a refugee camp; a group of women who had taken shelter at an obstetrics clinic; and an old peasant—a mother of thirteen—squatting on her haunches while she pounded flatbread with her hands and discussed her fate in a refugee camp with a Brechtian mixture of absolute cynicism toward the human condition and transcendent acceptance of it: "We used rocks for pillows. Camp security gave us an old tarp, an old teapot, an old bowl."

Perhaps the best hope for a new Afghanistan, liberated from extremism and misogyny, is encapsulated in a line from Rumi, the Sufi mystic, which Mojadidi took as an inspiration for her film: "Show your face, you are the mirror itself."

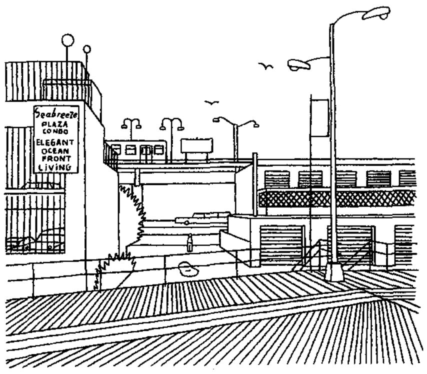
—*Judith Thurman*

FOR THE BOYS
HERE'S MISTER U.S.O.

As the honorary mayor of Hollywood, Johnny Grant is expected to perform a wide range of important duties. These have included bestowing the Walk of Fame stars, securing Hollywood a special postmark, and, in recent weeks, lobbying (unsuccessfully) to have the Hollywood sign painted red, white, and blue. For the past fifty years, Grant, who hosted the nightly feature "Johnny Grant Backstage in Hollywood" a few decades ago, has also served as the unofficial Hollywood ambassador to the U.S.O., making dozens of overseas tours with his good friend Bob Hope and other stars. In May, he celebrated his seventy-eighth birthday in a bunker in Kosovo.

Grant brings to his ceremonial office both the pragmatism of the Army Air Corps sergeant he was in the Second World War and the Duraflame warmth of a true entertainment personality. One recent morning, Grant, a short, silver-haired man with a ready grin, held court at his regular corner table at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, where he has lived for nine years. "Hi, folks, welcome to Hollywood!" he boomed at passing tourists, as he talked about the new U.S.O. tour, which left last week for closely guarded locations that probably include Budapest, Kosovo, and an aircraft carrier near South Asia. Grant didn't have a lot to say about the tour's slate of entertainers, with the exception of the headliner, Wayne Newton, who is the new chairman of the U.S.O. Celebrity Circle. He tried to look upbeat as the rest of the lineup was read aloud to him: Jessica Simpson, Neal McCoy, Peter MacNicol—"I don't know any of them!" Grant interrupted—Bo Derek, and the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. Still, he was optimistic. Of the cheerleaders, he said, "Any girl you could send works fine," and he added, "Bo still looks good!"

Grant was indignant that so many people have been saying that Wayne Newton has replaced Bob Hope. "Wayne's great, but that's the dumbest thing I ever heard!" he said. "Somebody might take Bob's place on the stage, but no one will ever match his international renown or his common touch." Hope would follow a starlet onstage, ogle her, then look sidelong at the crowd of G.I.s and say, "I just want you boys to see what you're fighting for." Grant said, "He'd find out the soldiers' gripes and nail them. He'd say, 'I've had so many shots I feel like a sieve,' or 'Definition of the most dangerous man in the world? A second lieutenant with a map.' Maybe not all that funny to the folks back home, but to the soldiers it was like sitting in the front row of the Palace.



"Last year, I took three of the girls who'd been with me in Korea in the fifties back over, and Penny Singleton"—who played Blondie in the Blondie movies—"was the big hit, and she was ninety-one! In the hotel in Seoul, she saw some fellows in the lobby and linked her arms with theirs, saying, 'I just love men in uniform.' And they said, 'We like you, too, lady—but we're airline pilots.' "

Grant acknowledged that the U.S.O. has had trouble keeping up with the times. "Nowadays, the soldiers all have laptops and want us to bring over not only the stars but also Bill Gates and Warren Buffett," he said. "So the U.S.O. needs to change, too. They should recruit from out here, not Washington." He thinks the functionaries on the East Coast don't have the knack for wrangling celebrities. "Some of the biggest names that ever went over—Jane Russell, Debbie Reynolds, Rita Moreno, Patricia Neal—were people I personally recruited. You need to meet with them face to face. And Tom Hanks or John Travolta isn't just going to hop on a bucket-seat airplane and go. Top talent worries about security and has to be flown first class, and then they all want a picture of themselves standing on a tank. We want something, and they want something, and that's how it's done."

"Hey, shugie!" He beckoned to a waitress for coffee, then continued, "But it's a trip they'd never forget. I remember Piper Laurie staying up the whole night with a dying soldier, nursing him. Sometimes in Vietnam, I'd go to a hospital ward and the guys had been all shot up and their legs were on pulleys, and I'd just walk in and say, 'It's all right, men—don't get up!' " His face crinkled with pleasure and sadness. "Bob Hope always said that his first G.I. audience, at March Field in 1941, made him an addict. There's a certain ring in that laughter and applause, because soldiers are so appreciative that they haven't been forgotten by the folks back home. And if as an entertainer you endure a few inconveniences they won't be anything like the ones your audience is having on the ground in Afghanistan." He laughed. "Hell, I'd go over myself, but maybe fifty-five trips is enough for an old man."

—*Tad Friend*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE PARANOIA PRINCIPLE

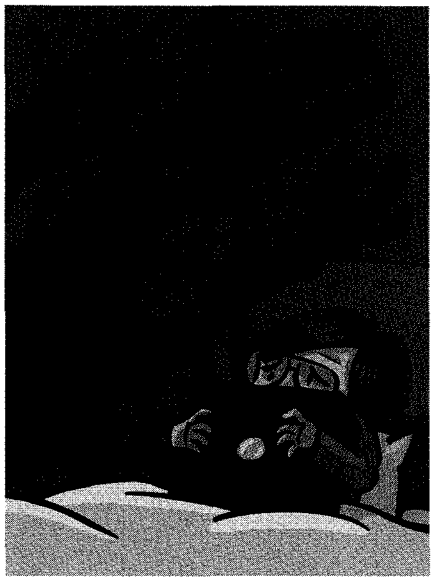
On the first night of the new millennium, Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft, was in a CNN studio, being interviewed by Larry King. Early in their conversation, King asked Gates, "Do you ever want to make hardware?" Gates answered as might have been expected: "No, that's one thing that from the very beginning we decided not to do. If you want to be a great software company, you have to be only a software company—you can't dabble in other things."

Last Thursday, the dabbling began. That's when the new Xbox video-game system went on sale in New York City, and Microsoft found itself officially in the hardware trade. With the exception of a few computer accessories—like the mouse and the keyboard—Microsoft had never really built anything before. It has always let other companies bear the expense and the risk of making real machines, while it stuck to writing and packaging the programs that made the machines work. Software is a better business than hardware. A new copy of Windows XP Professional sells for the exact same price as a new Xbox console. The difference is that it costs Microsoft almost nothing to make each new copy of Windows XP, while it costs at least three hundred and fifty dollars to make each new Xbox.

So why change? Well, the video-game industry grosses close to twenty billion dollars a year—more than Hollywood—and is growing much faster than the market for personal computers. The big players in video games, Sony and Nintendo, have reaped vast profits—as much as two billion dollars a year, according to a study by Merrill Lynch. If you were to build a high-powered game console, develop the right games, and market the package well, you could claim a sizable chunk of those profits. *Voilà*, the Xbox.

But there's more to it than that. While the distant prospect of a few hundred million dollars in profits may not be enough to induce Microsoft to stray from its knitting, the prospect of losing its most coveted franchise could be. That's what Microsoft was forced to wrestle with two years ago, when Sony unveiled the PlayStation 2. At the 1999 Comdex electronics trade show, in Las Vegas, the annual convention for the gizmo-and-gadget crowd, Nobuyuki Idei, the C.E.O. of Sony, pronounced, "The PlayStation 2 is more than a game machine. It can be more than a communications product. It can be more than a personal computer."

Idei saw the PlayStation 2 as a kind of Trojan horse. It looked like a simple video-game device, but it was actually a device that people would use to access the Internet, download movies, watch DVDs, and play music; eventually, it would do everything but curl hair and make toast. The heyday of the P.C. was over, Idei prophesied, and the first contender in the rush to replace it was the PlayStation 2. Soon the headlines were predicting war: "WILL FUTURE PLAYSTATIONS TARGET PCS?"



With the Xbox, Gates isn't playing offense; he's playing defense. Most of Microsoft's profits come, one way or another, from its domination of the personal computer. Idei, with his talk of replacing the P.C., was effectively marching into Microsoft's house and announcing that he was really going to enjoy living there in a few years. A few months after Idei's Comdex speech, Microsoft announced that it would be developing the Xbox. (A company called Flextronics would handle the production of the consoles.) If such machines were going to become all-purpose, Internet-ready entertainment modules, Microsoft had to get in the game. That meant designing the machine itself; only if it owned the hardware could it control the ground rules, and therefore the software. This is Microsoft's modus operandi. When it decides a new technology is important, it seeks to set the standards, forcing other companies to build to those standards.

The Xbox, then, is a hedge against irrelevance. It exists to minimize risk. During Microsoft's antitrust trial last year, people assumed that Gates was being disingenuous when he said that Microsoft's competitors worried him. But the worry was genuine. Throughout its history, Microsoft has been ruthless whenever its key franchises were threatened. It released Windows NT to take on Novell's NetWare. It released Internet Explorer after Netscape put out Navigator. It released the Pocket PC to counter 3Com's PalmPilot.

The threats haven't always been real. Over the past decade, Microsoft has wasted a lot of money tilting at windmills. In the early nineties, it invested heavily in "pen computing," which, for a brief spell, was all the rage. It has poured billions into interactive TV, which Gates has long insisted is just over the horizon (where it remains). Worried about the Internet, Microsoft bet millions of dollars on a product called Blackbird, which was going to replace the programming language HTML. That didn't happen. And when it seemed, a few years ago, that people's interest in P.C.s was waning, Microsoft spent huge sums on "Bob," a program (featuring a cartoon dog named Rover) that was meant to make computers seem friendly to people who were afraid of them. Bob didn't last even a year.

The failures may seem costly, but by enduring them Microsoft insures that history doesn't pass it by. The company perpetually operates on the paranoia principle; no threat is too improbable to ignore. This has helped Microsoft remain, in the face of repeated enemy incursions, one of the most profitable companies in the world. Sony, after all, could be wrong about the PlayStation 2; maybe it will prove to be little more than a souped-up Atari. But Microsoft won't wait to find out.

—*James Surowiecki*

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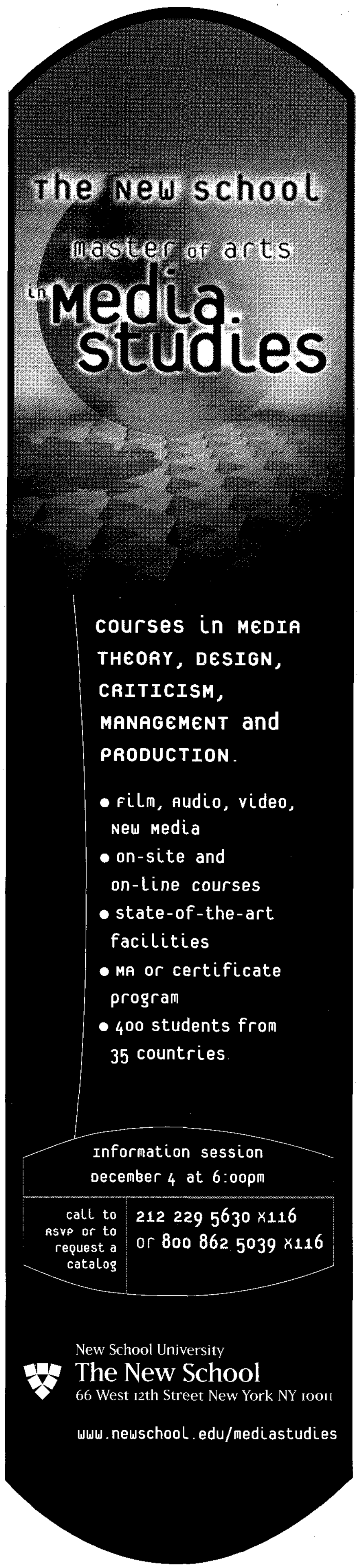

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE WORRIER

Newt Gingrich returns.

BY PETER J. BOYER

Among the items on Vice-President Dick Cheney's schedule for Tuesday, September 11th, was a meeting with his old friend Newt Gingrich, the former Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives. Gingrich resigned from the House in 1998, after a Party revolt against his leadership, but he remained in Washington, taking his place among the city's professional thinking caste with a fellowship at the American Enterprise Institute. He'd been given an office next to Jeane Kirkpatrick's, and a place on policy panels, and was getting handsome fees on the lecture circuit. Then, with the arrival of George W. Bush, Gingrich got what every Washington policy advocate most covets: he got inside. His old friend Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, named him to the Defense Policy Board. Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser, is a former colleague of Gingrich's at Stanford's Hoover Institution, where he is a visiting fellow. Karl Rove, President Bush's senior adviser, and Karen Hughes, the White House counsellor, routinely take his calls. Gingrich says simply, "I've got pretty remarkable access to all the senior leadership." Cheney values Gingrich's opinion highly enough to hear him out on even so delicate a subject as the one that Gingrich had planned to broach on September 11th—the President's inability to communicate effectively.

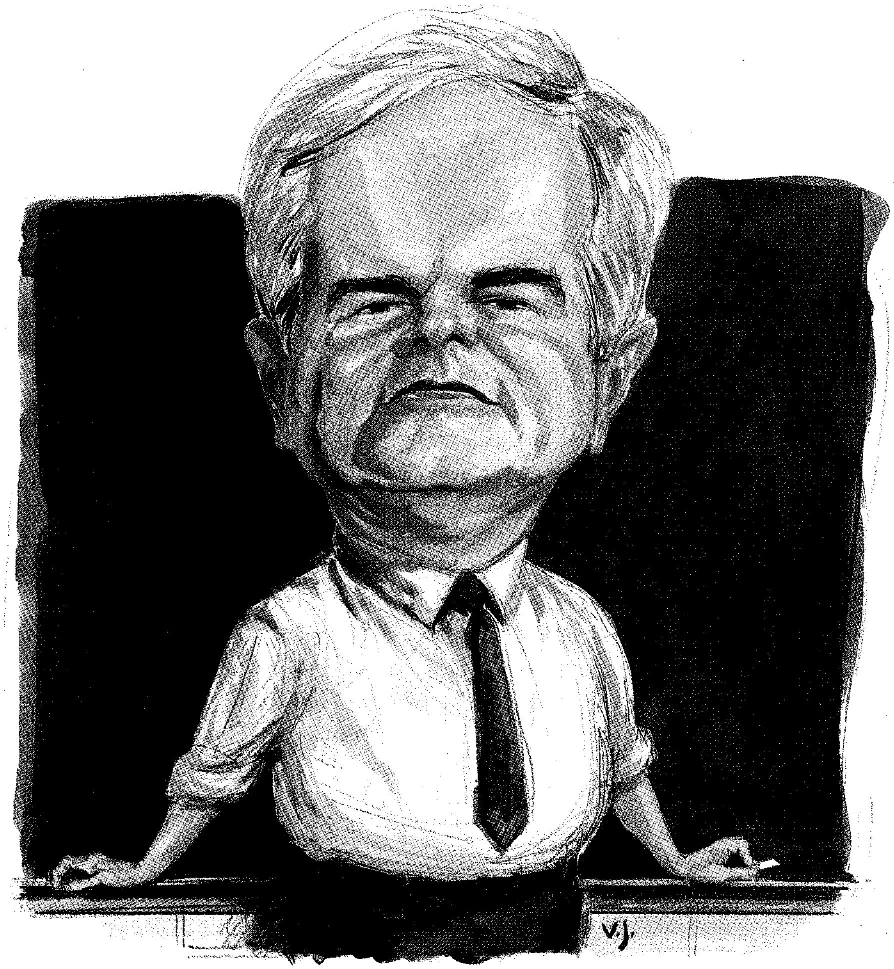
By the end of the first summer of Bush's Presidency, a season that began with the Republican loss of the Senate and deepening economic worries, it had become clear that the President's agenda was losing momentum. To Gingrich, the fault lay partly in Bush's sometimes tortured public performances. "People who were really, really for him were saying to me that they'd cringe at press conferences," Gingrich says. "They were just grateful if he got through without embarrassment." This worried Gingrich, who felt that Bush was neglecting one of his principal duties—to instruct. "The country needed a leader who could educate and rally the country, and the only person who can do that is the President of the United States. He was doing less than his full job if he wasn't capable of doing that—that was a job definition."

Gingrich, a firm believer in psychophysiology (he willed himself out of youthful shyness, he says, by learning to trigger an endorphin rush at the sight of a camera), had planned to talk to Cheney about getting Bush to focus on his communication problem. The terrorist attacks scrubbed the meeting that day, and, as it happened, the President himself soon answered Gingrich's concerns with his commanding speech before Congress on September 20th. "After the speech to the Congress, I tore up that particular memo," Gingrich says. "After that speech, you knew—O.K., this guy's awake now."

Awake, perhaps, but was George W. Bush truly ready for the challenge that Gingrich likens to the Second World War and to the Cold War struggle against Communism? "You have to remember," he says, "this is a Texas governor, learning to be leader of the world." When Gingrich considers the challenge ahead, and takes the measure of the Administration's performance so far, he is still worried. "We don't have a clue how we're going to deal with terrorism," he says.

As Gingrich's friends in the Administration must have known, the price of having Gingrich as an outside adviser is the same as it was during his time of national leadership—forbearance toward his natural state, which is one of alarm and agitation. Just as he surveyed the mostly peaceful and prosperous nineteen-nineties and saw grave dangers, Gingrich, a professor and a ravenous student of history, reviews the war on terror and discerns, even with the Northern Alliance sweeping across northern Afghanistan, the prospect of long-term failure.

"I am not for being pleasant when we are not winning," he says. "I just think that cheerleading is very dangerous. Churchill did not say, 'There won't be any more bombs tomorrow morning.' He said, 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat.' He also said, 'We shall fight on the beaches.' And he meant it."



"You have to remember, this is a Texas governor, learning to be leader of the world."

VICTOR JUHASZ

What Gingrich frets about is whether the Administration really means to act on the President's declared intention to root out global terrorism wherever it exists, and his assertion that the war in Afghanistan is just the beginning. To the hawkish members of the Administration, that means Iraq—divesting Baghdad of its weapons of mass destruction and, perhaps, undoing the regime of Saddam Hussein. Gingrich would have the President go further: confront Iraq even while the engagement in Afghanistan continues, and go after terrorist operations in Somalia and Sudan as well.

Such matters are the subject of much debate inside the Administration, and it is clear which team of senior advisers Gingrich is aligned with. Condoleezza Rice, he says, is a person for whom he has "tremendous respect," adding, "I think she'll do a very good job." Rumsfeld is "one of the smartest people in government, very determined, very serious." As for Secretary of State Colin Powell, Gingrich is diplomatic. "Colin is a very good diplomat, and a very good spokesman for America," he says. "I think that one of the weaknesses that Colin faces is that he is presiding over a bureaucracy that, at least since F.D.R.'s days, has been notorious for its inability to understand American goals. F.D.R. was fed up with it and routinely went around it. Eisenhower did the same." After carefully pointing out that members of the State Department were nevertheless "very smart, very decent peo-

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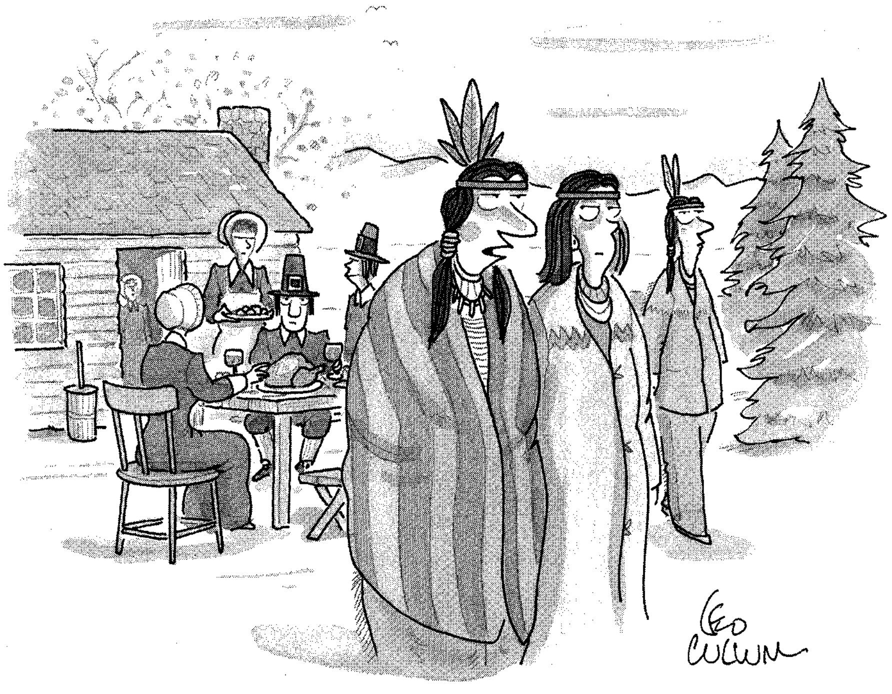
ple," he goes on, "Colin went in there, legitimately, to try to build their morale. He spent a lot of energy building their morale. But he didn't think, too, that it had to be a two-way contract, that they had to then think seriously about the President's policy. You get a lot of the same stuff out of the State Department. I don't blame Colin at all, except I think he ought to be tougher at imposing into the bureaucracy the direction the United States has been going in."

The inclination to broaden the war is at odds with the State Department's impulse to build and hold inherently fragile coalitions—which Gingrich dismisses as "the 1990 response." He says, "You have this State Department fetish with stability at this instant over getting to a realistic, honest assessment of the situation." Still, he is encouraged by the degree of Rice's influence over the President. "I think there's a section of the State Department that will once a day come up with a genuinely bad idea, and I think the strength of this Administration so far is that those ideas seem to die somewhere around the national-security office."

The prize in the contest is the President himself, who, Gingrich senses, is only now beginning to fill his role. In watching the President's homeland-security speech in Atlanta on November 8th, Gingrich was pleased to see Bush take the stage to the strains of "Hail to the Chief." "They didn't use to use 'Hail to the Chief'—that's changed," he said. "The President of the United States introduced by 'Hail to the Chief' is symbolically important. He was a little Jimmy Carterish early on about that, and now he's decided he's really the President of the United States. That's important."

On the evening that the war in northern Afghanistan began to turn decisively in favor of the Northern Alliance, Gingrich gave a talk to interns at the American Enterprise Institute, offering the nascent policy wonks his advice on life ("Dream big") and hard work ("If you work eighty hours a week, that's probably about right. If you work sixty, that's barely marginal"). Inevitably, his young admirers pressed for his views about the military campaign. "I am not convinced today we are winning," he told them. "I am very concerned about this campaign."

Gingrich later explained that he didn't doubt the final outcome of the fighting ("Unless we are just maniacally dumb, we are going to win this war; this is an overmatch larger than Desert Storm"), but he was concerned about the quality of the war planning behind it. "You don't get the sense of comprehensive campaign planning," he said. "We are better at dropping bombs than we are at designing a political, cultural campaign. So the guys who are all ready to go fight Desert Storm II in Afghanistan designed a mechanical military campaign without a political-cultural surrounding. And, in retrospect, the President probably should have waited two extra weeks, or three extra weeks, and made sure they had a plan that was coherent. Instead, we got action without meaning, in my judgment."



"That was nice, but I don't want to make it a regular thing."

Gingrich's harsh assessment was due partly to his pique over a news article he had read that day about a Central Command directive that he found beyond comprehension. It had to do with the Army's 4th Psychological Operations group, or PsyOps, which had designed a radio propaganda campaign to be broadcast into Afghanistan. The planners wanted to broadcast music to the Afghans, partly as a reminder of their deprivation under the Taliban government, which banned music. The Central Command insisted that the broadcasts contain textual information only. "The Central Command didn't want to waste time with music, not understanding that that's why people listen to the radio," Gingrich says. "And you have to wonder, Who is the clown at the Central Command who didn't get this, O.K.? I mean, to have people who know nothing impose dumb ideas, instead of asking the people who know something—after a certain point, it becomes totally unacceptable."

In the end, the planners made their case, and the music was broadcast, but the dispute illustrated for Gingrich the lack of a fully considered, coherent program that included the key element of selling the idea of the American cause. "Somebody should have been saying, 'Let's assume we'll win.' That's our working assumption. Well, then, where's the planning team for victory? Where are the planes landing at Bagram and landing at these other airfields, dropping off all the goodies so that the people in what I would call 'liberated Afghanistan' are living proof on world television that America's allies do better?" He goes on, "There should be a planning team making that real and vivid, and that planning team should be producing real product that is changing the lives of people in 'liberated Afghanistan,' so it's live on television, so Al-Jazeera can go and in-

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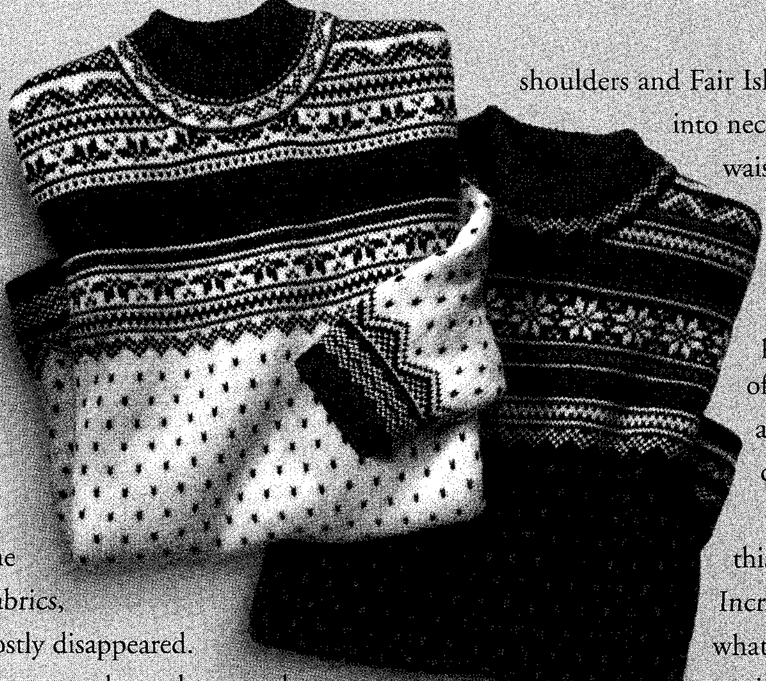

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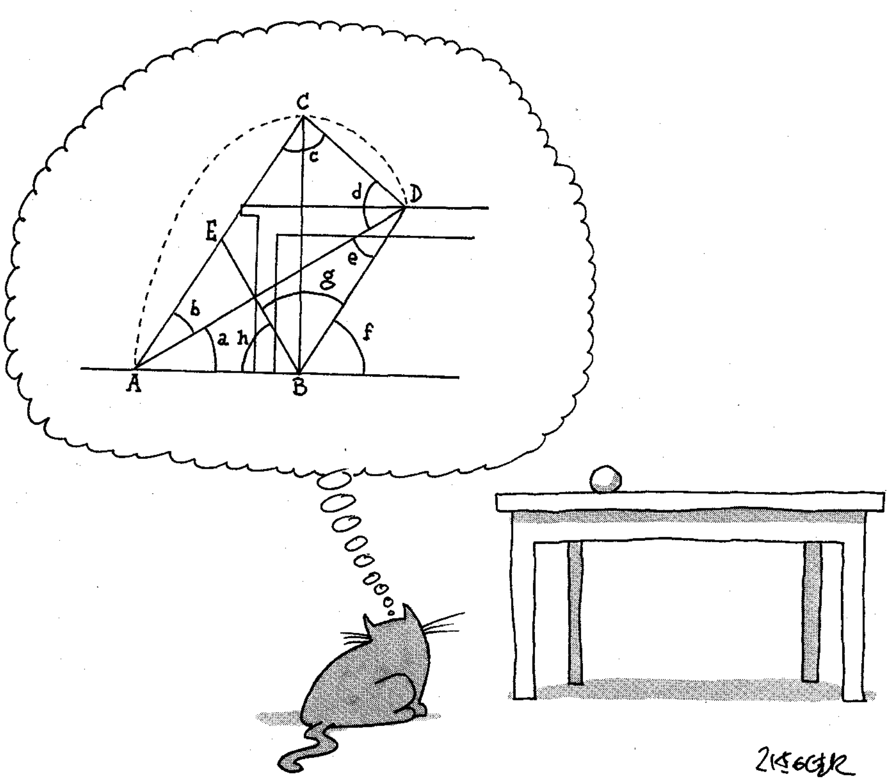

terview people who're saying, 'God, I'm glad the Americans won—my kids have a flush toilet.' "

Such criticism poses the paradox that the people in charge of the war—Rumsfeld; his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz; Condoleezza Rice—are Gingrich's closest allies. "I think Rumsfeld is a terrific guy, I think Wolfowitz is a great guy, but I think the underlying fact is that you have Bill Clinton's generals designing a campaign that is not very creative, and it's not very clever," Gingrich says. "I think it's important to recognize you have a very thin layer of Bush appointees over the Clinton bureaucracy."

Gingrich notes that George C. Marshall, Franklin Roosevelt's Army Chief of Staff, forced hundreds of colonels into retirement before Pearl Harbor, because he lacked confidence in them. "This Administration currently has fired nobody, and that's very dangerous, because it says that, no matter how mediocre you are, if you can give a good press conference you can keep your job. I think the President has got to be tougher, at every level."

Everyone in Washington agrees that the September 11th attacks were at least in part the result of a monumental American intelligence failure, but Gingrich takes issue with those who believe that now is not the moment for recrimination. The Central Intelligence Agency, he says, should be reorganized from top to bottom, and heads should roll. "We need to hold some people accountable for the last couple of years," he says. "I don't think you can just walk off and say that the very people who couldn't find bin Laden for six years are now looking for bin Laden, and say, 'Gee, don't you feel comfortable now? They're more *serious* now.' I just think you need a really thorough overhaul in the entire intelligence community."

Critics of the C.I.A. have laid the blame for its failures partly on a Clinton-era directive restricting recruitment of operatives with questionable human-rights records. The policy was defended recently before the Senate Intelligence Committee by a C.I.A. lawyer. Gingrich was dismayed, and says that Bush should have fired the lawyer before he returned to his office from Capitol Hill.

So far, at least, Bush has been more inclined to try to bolster the morale of his intelligence-gathering agencies, conducting pep rallies at both the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. "It'll be interesting to see if George Bush moves from being leader of the American people, which he clearly now is, to genuine Commander-in-Chief," Gingrich says. "A Commander-in-Chief issues commands."

• •

Gingrich, like Churchill, is one of those figures who fix on dangers only dimly perceived by others, and whose urgent warnings are often unheeded because of the messenger's complicated political biography. Gingrich issued his first warnings about the need to confront terrorism in his 1984 book "Window of Opportunity," and he has been a serious student of the subject ever since. In 1997, Gingrich and President Clinton jointly launched a commission to assess the near- and long-term threats to American national security, and when Gingrich resigned from Congress he joined the commission, which was headed by former Senators Warren Rudman and Gary Hart. The commission's final report, issued in January, warned of the vulnerability of "the U.S. homeland" to "catastrophic attack."

Throughout the summer, Gingrich met with defense intelligence officials in the Pentagon to discuss how Secretary Rumsfeld might begin to warn Americans about the nation's domestic vulnerability. On September 11th, Gingrich says, he was saddened, but not at all surprised, by the attacks in New York and Washington, and he believes they may be followed by more catastrophic ones. "The two things I worry about most are a nuclear weapon and an engineered infectious disease," he says. "The third thing I worry about is an aerosolized anthrax delivered by air, or delivered through a subway, because a subway would act as a pneumatic system to spread it. The Army actually tested that years ago. It's very frightening." Then he adds, "Take the four airplanes, except this time have them be conventional trucks in the major tunnels during rush hour. And there are a lot of other things I'm not going to get into. But there are lots of conventional vulnerabilities in a high civilization that cause a lot of damage, O.K.?"

Gingrich believes that the two crucial aspects of homeland security—detection and prevention of attacks, and dealing with the consequences of catastrophe—are now woefully inadequate. "Because the victims all tragically died, the World Trade Center attack understressed our medical system," he says. "If we'd have had five thousand severely injured people coming out of those buildings, we'd have had a serious problem, too."

In his talk with the interns, Gingrich noted that the public reassurances regularly sounded by the Administration are unwarranted, and he took particular issue with Attorney General John Ashcroft's recent pronouncement that America had "emerged victorious" on the homefront in "the opening battle in the war against terrorism." Gingrich said, "The fact is, we are not currently winning at home. I don't regard six thousand dead Americans as winning the first round. We haven't caught anybody in the anthrax problem. We haven't caught anybody in this country, that I know of yet, on Al Qaeda's side, and we haven't caught bin Laden. How can we have won the first round?"

The new Homeland Security apparatus, Gingrich asserts, is not remotely ready for the challenge it is meant to meet—a problem that he implicitly blames, at least in part, on the decision by President Bush to select a political pal, Pennsylvania's former governor Tom Ridge, as the first Homeland Security chief. "I don't fault a Tommy Thompson or a Tom Ridge—these guys were terrific governors, they're close friends of mine," he says. "But national security is a really complicated area. I mean, four-star generals spend a career studying it. And to say to Tom Ridge, 'Come down from Harrisburg, take this thing over, and start telling the country what you think' is, I think, an inhuman burden. He's a terrific guy, and he'll eventually do a terrific job. But they've got to slow down, they've got to think more deeply about larger change. And I think it'll take a while to sort out."

He goes on, "We are just not serious yet. We're working very frantically, we're rushing around, we're doing things, but we're not slowing down and saying, 'What would it take three years from now to really be safer? What would it take three years from now to have a really big response capability?' I mean, we're doing things, we have lots of activities. But in the absence of coherent, systematic design, you can't distinguish activity from progress." The government's uncertain and seemingly confused response to the anthrax attacks, Gingrich insists, makes his case against the usefulness of bureaucracy in a moment of crisis. He cites the fact that the Centers for Disease Control still has no notion of which, or how many, laboratories have the Ames strain of anthrax (the strain that was used in the terror mailings). "It would not have been hard to have said on the opening day, 'Every laboratory that has anthrax will contact C.D.C. in the next six hours.' "

So far, it appears, the Administration figure who has most impressed Gingrich is the President himself. "Bush wanted to be *sorta* President—it was cool," he says. "And he meant well by it. Now Bush is *being* President, in a very different way. And my sense is he's learning pretty darned fast. I mean, I would say he impresses me more than any political leader since Reagan—his ability to learn profound things. I think of George W. Bush as a great game athlete who is not a very good practice athlete. And now he's in the real thing, and he's performing."

Gingrich is offering advice to the Administration, directly and indirectly, on matters ranging from the economy (he suggested giving travellers a thousand-dollar tax credit for personal travel, such as flying on commercial planes) to finding a more efficient means to feed hungry Afghans (contract the job out to Wal-Mart). There is some evidence that the Administration is listening. Gingrich's only public criticism of Colin Powell came after the State Department issued its list of global terrorist organizations and omitted Hamas and Hezbollah, presumably out of reluctance to offend the states that support them, particularly Syria and Iran. Gingrich wrote a letter of complaint to Powell, and both groups were added to the terror list.

Richard Perle, who heads the Defense Policy Board that Gingrich sits on, attests that the former Speaker has a new influence. "Newt is listened to because he's persuasive, he's listened to because he's convincing," Perle says. "And it's not just because he's on the policy board. Most of what he has to say is not just in the policy board, which meets infrequently, but in his discussions with a variety of Administration officials."

Gingrich's own assessment of his renewed currency is that he deals in a commodity that is much in demand just now. "They like ideas," he says. "They know I've been around a long time. And they know they don't have to obey me. That's a very important distinction." ♦

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I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE

A liberal town's school system meets the new patriotism.

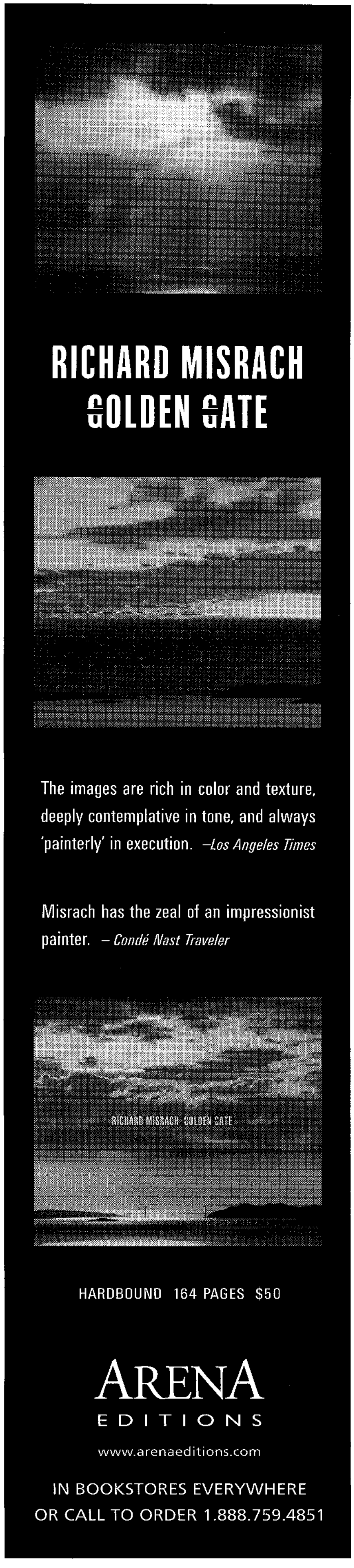
BY MARK SINGER

MADISON, WISCONSIN

Even Scott Jensen's detractors concede that the speaker of the Wisconsin State Assembly has done a skillful job of consolidating his reputation as a patriotic fellow. In 1995, Jensen, a Republican who represents the Milwaukee suburb of Waukesha, proposed to amend an existing law in a way that would have placed an American flag in every classroom and required students in all public and private schools to recite the Pledge of Allegiance or sing the national anthem every day. The vote in the Assembly, where Republicans held a slight majority, was 95–2. The bill then made its way to the Senate, where a committee chairman, in effect, stuck it in a drawer. Jensen was back at it in 1999, with an identical result—nearly unanimous approval in the Assembly, followed by a quiet death in the Senate. Earlier this year, the same thing happened. By then, the speaker no doubt had a clear picture of what was really going on. "We all vote for Jensen's flag bills," a Democratic assemblyman told me, "because we know they'll get killed somewhere else, and why put yourself through a tough vote?"

One school-board member said that, because of the "coerciveness of the classroom," a new la

After the most recent setback, Jensen resorted to a tactic so effective that many of his colleagues wondered why he hadn't tried it before: he attached his proposal as a rider to the state budget bill. Routinely, hundreds of statutes that have virtually nothing to do with the budget per se, and that often possess dubious public-policy value, get appended to the budget bill. As co-chair of a joint Assembly-Senate committee that determined its precise content, Jensen was



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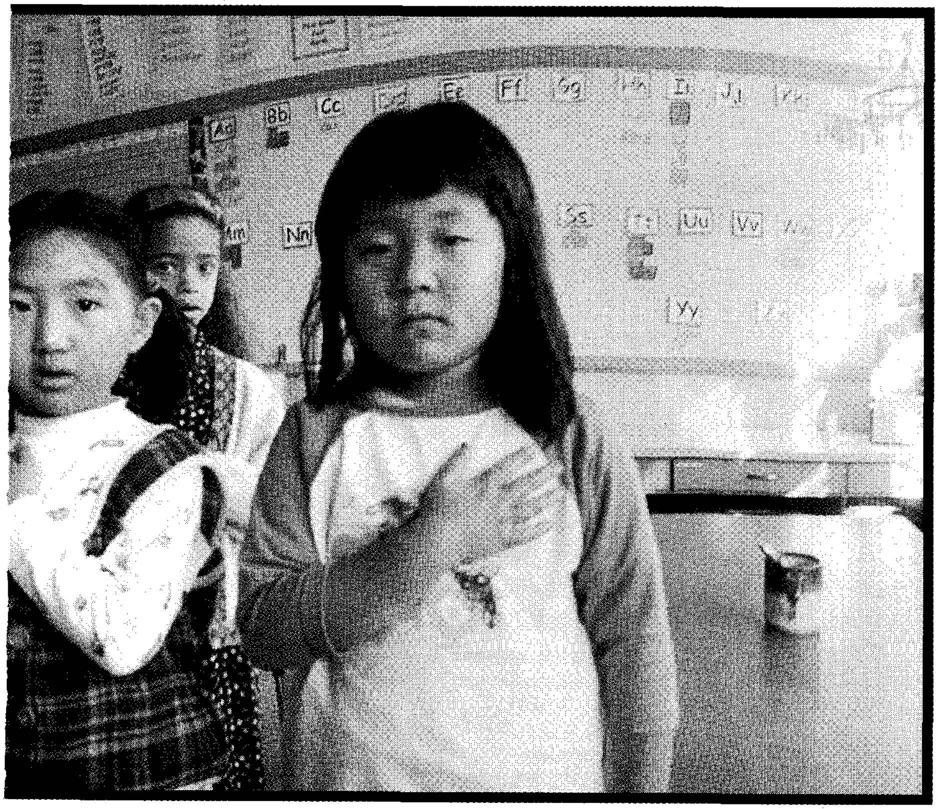
ideally situated to protect provisions he cared about. Not coincidentally, the budget bill is also the one piece of legislation that is certain, eventually, to get signed into law.

Another distinguishing feature of Wisconsin politics is that its capital city, Madison, is also the home of its largest public educational institution. The same thing is true of Texas, Ohio, and a few other states, but the cultural climate engendered by the University of Wisconsin sets Madison apart. When the rest of the country began drifting to the right during the seventies, Madison held its ground, and it has remained an island of liberalism—or, if you prefer, of gray-bearded soft-in-the-middle leftie-pinko Commie-symp delusional behavior. The dominant Madison world view is a lineal descendant of the Wisconsin Idea, the philosophy championed by Robert La Follette, the congressman, governor, senator, and, in 1924, Progressive Party Presidential candidate. It survives and thrives, often in amusingly exaggerated ways, no matter how many red-meat conservative politicians seek to advance themselves by "running against Madison." Twenty-three years ago, a moderate Republican governor named Lee Dreyfus referred to Madison as "fifty-two square miles surrounded by reality." It's a tribute to Madisonians' appetite for lively, usually friendly debate that nowadays this characterization tends to be cited at least as often by the left as by the right. Certain conspiracy-minded folk in Madison believe that Jensen opportunistically engineered the passage of his pet amendment with the confidence that Madison would find a way to fail his patriotic litmus test. Jensen himself says, "People think I'm this extremely clever strategist who set them up. But, actually, I just wanted every school day to begin with the Pledge of Allegiance."



uld not protect students who chose not to say the pledge. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

The new law mandating the pledge or the national anthem every day was supposed to have gone into effect September 1st, at the beginning of the current academic year. Because of some benign bureaucratic confusion, however, a few weeks went by before state officials got the word out to local school districts. By then, September 11th had happened and Americans had begun to think in unprecedented ways about what it meant to salute the flag or publicly express one's love of country. This proved no less true of Madison than anyplace else. Nevertheless, the city was soon caught up in a not at all friendly debate of the only-in-Madison variety, a controversy that in its most heated moments succeeded in overshadowing the national crisis that had provoked it.

During the final week of September, parents of Madison public-school students read newspaper reports and received formal notification that, come Monday, October 1st, the Pledge of Allegiance or the national anthem would become part of the daily ritual. That weekend, some members of Madison's seven-seat school board received phone calls from apprehensive parents and teachers. The new law stipulated that "no pupil may be compelled, against the pupil's objections or those of the pupil's parents or guardian, to recite the pledge or sing the anthem." Apparently, however, that language wasn't good enough. When a retired Madison high-school English teacher and school-board member named Bill Keys fielded such calls, he gave his standard response: "Come to the next school-board meeting." As it happened, one was scheduled for the evening of October 1st. Ten parents showed up to spell out their opposition to the law, which amounted to this:

Requiring the Pledge of Allegiance, with its reference to "one nation under God," violated the doctrine of church-state separation. Furthermore, members of certain religious groups never say the pledge because they're forbidden to utter oaths other than to God. Then there was the tricky business of what "God" connoted. A University of Wisconsin psychology lecturer with children in elementary and middle school told the board, "While it may seem that the words 'under God' do not endorse a particular religion, they in fact do. Those words imply a certain type of God, a male god, a singular god. There are families in Madison that do not believe in a supreme being, there are families that believe in a Goddess rather than a God, and there are families that believe in a spirit world populated with multiple deities." On balance, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was deemed less offensive than the Pledge of Allegiance, but its militaristic imagery did pose a problem; "the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air" wasn't the sort of poetry Quakers and other committed pacifists wanted their children declaiming each morning. Above all, leaving aside questions of minority rights (why should non-Americans be placed in a position that marginalized them even more than they already were?), what the law really amounted to was an unsubtle form of coercion, one that smacked of McCarthy-era loyalty oaths and defined patriotic self-expression in narrow and unimaginative terms.

Those, anyway, were the arguments, and they raised questions that couldn't be resolved in a single evening. The board president, Calvin Williams, decided to call a special meeting to address the topic. When it took place, a week later, a different group of ten parents attended. On neither occasion did any speaker defend the new law. After an hour-long discussion, the board approved, by a 3–2 vote (two members were absent), a resolution put forward by Keys: every school would offer, every day, a wordless, instrumental version of the national anthem. Period. The two dissenters, a University of Wisconsin Law School dean named Ruth Robarts and a Hmong immigrant social worker named Shwaw Vang, were not defenders of the pledge. Rather, they felt that Keys's compromise still didn't adequately protect nonparticipants. "I'm just very uncomfortable with anything that does not remove the coerciveness of the classroom," Robarts said. Why not comply with the law, she asked, by offering the pledge or the national anthem at a specified time each day in a gymnasium or auditorium? Because, the majority agreed, such an approach would be too time-consuming and cumbersome.

As it turned out, time-consuming and cumbersome barely described the unwelcome consequences of the board's vote. A headline in the next day's *Capital Times*, the more liberal of Madison's two daily newspapers, said "PLEDGE BANNED IN CITY SCHOOLS." In the days that followed, as hostile reactions to the decision rained down on the school board, Keys and his defenders would maintain that the reference to a "ban" was inaccurate and had triggered the backlash. The resolution, they pointed out, made no mention of the pledge. Semantic sophistry, the critics countered; whether or not the pledge was actually mentioned, the result was, de facto, a ban. The air war in Afghanistan was two days old when the message went out over the right-wing talk-radio airwaves: "In the Madison, Wisconsin, public schools they have—get this—*banned the Pledge of Allegiance.* Banned it! Unbelievable. Un-American."

The day after the vote, Art Rainwater, the superintendent of the Madison Metropolitan School District, and Calvin Williams, the board president, were publicly stating that the board would reconsider its decision. Though Williams had voted with Keys, he called a press conference and said, ruefully, "We did not consider all the ways it could have been interpreted or misinterpreted." Then he announced yet another special meeting, to be held the following Monday—during which, it seemed foreordained, the board would reverse itself. Commentary by Matt Drudge, Rush Limbaugh, and the like prompted acolytes to flood Rainwater's office with complaints. Temporary employees had to be hired to answer the phones. Angry E-mails arrived at the rate of a thousand per hour, until the E-mail system began returning them unread.

"They're no more pointless now than they ever were."

On October 15th, twelve hundred people jammed the auditorium and an overflow cafeteria in one of Madison's four public high schools for an event that lasted from five o'clock in the afternoon until two-thirty the following morning. Depending upon who was offering the postgame analysis, what transpired was a nasty spectacle of bullying jingoism or a stirring display of pure participatory democracy—or both. Just as the meeting got under way, a large contingent of the audience rose and, as if taunting the school-board members gathered on the auditorium stage, shouted the Pledge of Allegiance and followed that with fist-waving chants of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!" Then came the speakers, each allotted three minutes—a hundred and sixty-six opinionated citizens, by turns pro, con, eloquent, inarticulate, sentimental, arrogant, humble, coolly analytical, belligerently nationalistic, self-righteous, philosophical, and, of course, unassailably patriotic. Another six hundred and eighty-three people submitted written statements. When it was all over, the board voted 6–1 to undo its previous decision. Individual principals would decide whether to offer the pledge or the national anthem in their schools, and the ceremony each day would include this preamble: "We live in a nation of freedom. Participation in the Pledge or Anthem is voluntary. Those who wish to participate

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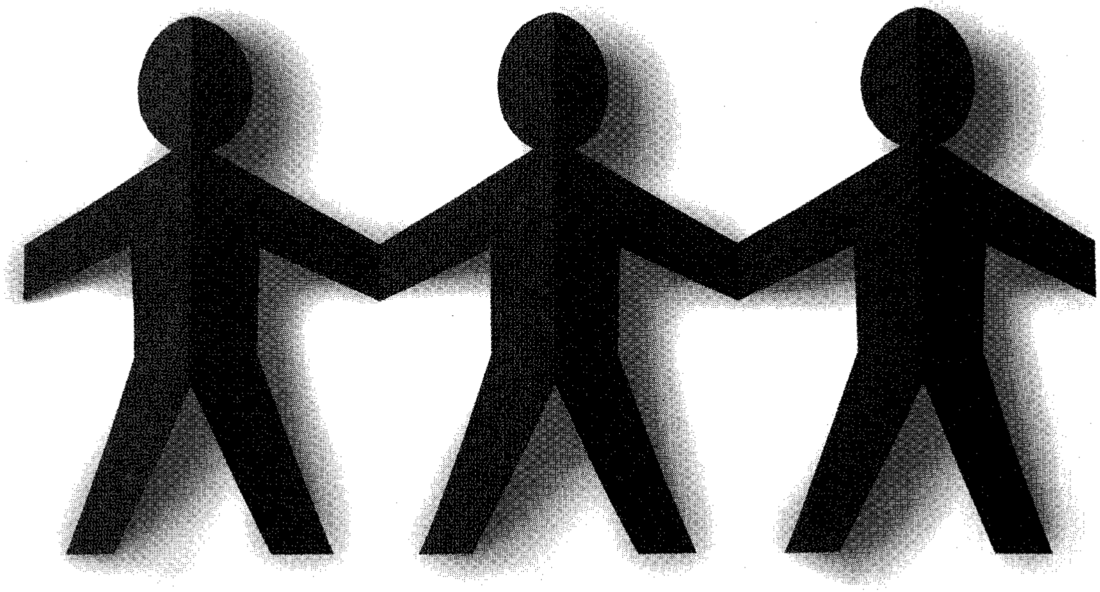

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may stand; others may remain seated.”

The lone holdout was Keys, who, ironically—but, because this was Madison, perhaps not so surprisingly—happened to be the lone white male member of the board, which also included two women, two African-American males, a Hispanic male, and Shwaw Vang, the Hmong immigrant. A great deal of vituperation was directed at Keys, and, in an especially creepy way, at Vang. During the in-your-face recitation of the pledge, Keys and Vang had remained seated. Before the members of the public gave their three-minute statements, Vang, a soft-spoken father of three in his mid-thirties, took the microphone and said, “As Americans, each of us has a right to do what he feels is right, and I have as much right as anyone else. I won’t be forced to do something against my will. That’s a right I have as a citizen. I also believe in the Pledge of Allegiance. I say it because I believe in it and when I want to say it—not because a group of people forces me to say it. Now I’m going to say the pledge. I invite everyone to stand and say it with me. Those who don’t want to do so, I respect your right not to, and I hope you have the courage to remain seated.” Whereupon he faced an American flag, stage right, and, along with virtually the entire audience and all the other school-board members except Keys, recited the pledge.

The next time Vang spoke was hours later, after a local talk-radio shock jock named Chris Krok took the floor and attacked him, saying, “You’ve been called Seesaw Shwaw. You’ve said ‘yea’ and ‘nay.’ You say the pledge promotes war, but this is not Vietnam—this is America.” Vang was not unprepared for this sort of idiocy. On his home telephone-answering machine, he had recorded greetings in both English and Hmong, for which his reward had been messages from callers saying things like “I can’t even understand what you’re saying. You don’t belong on the school board.” Vang’s only direct response to Krok was a terse “I just want to correct one fact: I wasn’t born in Vietnam.” Then, toward the end of the meeting, before the board voted, he elaborated. He had been born, he explained, in Laos, the son of an officer in a special guerrilla unit funded by the C.I.A. “I was never a soldier,” he said. “But I was a child living in the midst of war. As a parent, and as somebody who had gone through that experience, I prayed that my children would never be placed in that situation, that no children would be placed in that situation. I’ve seen a lot of what war can do. I question whether patriotism only means serving in the military or whether it isn’t possible to serve the country in a different manner. I can tell you that in Thailand or Laos, if the pledge or the national anthem is being said, no matter where you are you’d better stand up straight and salute. There’s a feeling of fear that goes with that, the fear of a government that wants to control every single move a person makes. In Laos you have to have total respect for the government or you will be persecuted. Almost every Laotian teacher and student says the pledge, but does that teach them to be more patriotic? I don’t think so.”

And what was Vang’s emotional reaction to what he’d just witnessed? “I’ve never been so scared for myself and my kids in all the years I’ve been here.”

Even before the vote was taken, the next round in the battle had begun. That same evening, in the same building, an organization that had incorporated itself as the Madison School Board Recall Committee held a press conference and announced plans to try to remove from office Bill Keys, Calvin Williams, and Carol Carstensen, the third board member who had first voted to “ban” the pledge. A statement by the group’s chairman, a former Republican congressman named Scott Klug, made plain that, while he normally had little interest in education policy, this situation was extraordinary. A recall campaign posed a logistical challenge: almost thirty-two thousand petition signatures would have to be collected before a special election could take place. Regardless of the outcome, for conservatives here was an irresistible opportunity to score points at the expense of Madison’s liberal hegemony. “This is Madison,” Klug told reporters. “Before this is all over, there’ll be somebody somewhere holding a bake sale for Osama bin Laden, saying he’s been misunderstood and is the way he is because he didn’t have mittens as a child in Saudi Arabia.”

Within a few days, the recall activists had refined their strategy: they would

YEAR ONE

I was still standing
on a northern corner—

Moonlit winter clouds the color of the desperation of wolves.

Proof
of your existence? There is nothing
but.

—*Franz Wright*

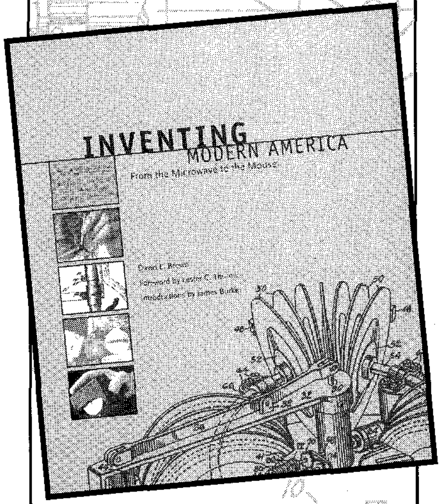
go after Keys, and they would time their petition drive so that a vote could take place next February, when Williams and Carstensen, should they choose to run again, will likely face a reëlection primary. The people I spoke with in Madison tended to agree with John Nichols, an editorial writer for the *Capital Times*, who said of Keys's antagonists, "I know these people. Most of them are sincere. They honestly believe the school board went off the deep end. Most of Madison believes that the school board made a mistake. But it's not a recallable offense." Keys himself struck me as neither contrite nor distressed. "I still have a good relationship with all the members of the board," he said. "I'm not carrying this on my back. My election committee has already met. I've received lots of mail from people saying 'When can I contribute? What can I do?' "

Even by Madison standards, Keys lacks the aura and demeanor of a politician. He's sixty years old, pink-faced and freckled, with red hair that's completing the transition to white. His drooping mustache, wire-rimmed glasses, plaid shirts, and bluejeans give him the overall look of a lean Wilford Brimley. The conventional wisdom is that Keys stands a far better chance of defeating a recall than Williams or Carstensen do of winning reëlection, because, when confronted with an angry mob à la "High Noon," he didn't blink or budge. "It's most important that you affirm your principles and live your principles in a time of crisis," he told me. "Otherwise, you don't really believe in them." Consistency, it seems, is Keys's most consistent trait. His first teaching job, in the mid-sixties, at a high school in suburban Maryland, ended after the principal wandered into his classroom during a discussion of "The Canterbury Tales." In the principal's estimation, Keys's pedagogy threatened to undermine the morality and religious beliefs of the students. "Change or leave," the principal advised, so he left. He found a more congenial atmosphere in Madison, where, for thirty-one years, he taught English literature, film criticism, and writing at West High School, in a leafy, tidy neighborhood near the University of Wisconsin campus. During a graduation address at West several years ago, Keys, who for three years was president of the local teachers' union, referred to teaching as a "sacred ritual."

Keys retired in the spring of 1999, was elected to the school board the following spring, and for the past year has spent every Wednesday as a volunteer at a mental-health facility, where he teaches classes in English and citizenship to members of the local Hmong community. He happened to be teaching on the day that the *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison's other daily newspaper, published an editorial fulminating against him. "Someone in class that day asked about the word 'reputation.' And I used the newspaper editorial as an example. I said, 'A reputation is what people say about you. But it isn't necessarily an indication of who you are. Who you are is what you do.' "

Would the school board have acted as it did, I asked, and would Keys be in the position he finds himself in, if September 11th hadn't happened?

"That's the road not taken," he said. "I don't think what we did blew up in Madison's face. I think the nation blew up in



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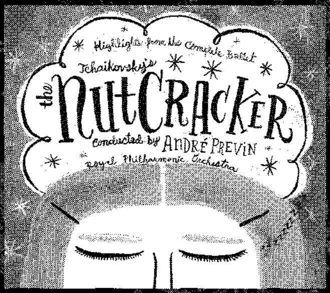
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Madison's face. I was asked on TV, 'Why did you tackle this issue now?' I said, 'We didn't tackle it, it tackled us.' The law was passed before September 11th and implemented after September 11th, and what could we do?"

From my meeting with Keys, I went to an appointment with Bill Geist, a freelance tourism consultant who has become Scott Klug's co-chair in the recall campaign. As we sat in his dining room, Geist, a broad-shouldered fellow in his mid-forties, said, "I like the fact that when my friends and I gather around this table I have raging progressives on one side and raging conservatives on the other. That's what makes this a wonderful town. But the minute somebody slams the door and says, 'Nope, you can't salute the flag or sing the national anthem in school,' then Madison isn't such a wonderful place.

"This whole thing isn't about religion, it isn't about patriotism. It's about 'Do these people on the school board represent this community's best interests?' There are those who try to paint us as trying to shove our nationalistic views down people's throats. That just isn't the case. There's no coercion here. If anything, we think the board overstepped its bounds in telling principals and teachers that they could not lead their class in the pledge. That's a form of coercion.

"Maybe I've got too much faith in today's kids, because I think they do honor tolerance and diversity. I realize there's the chance that somebody might feel ostracized in one way or another, but so do the kids with zits, so do the dweebs, so do the stoners and the jocks. Everybody has a little of that. I think kids today respect each other better than we did. I understand the issue, but to take away rights from ninety-seven per cent of the kids to protect what might happen to three per cent, I've got to question that one."

The next morning, I went to West High School, Keys's former place of work, to test Geist's hypothesis. Because I was physically incapable of being in more than one classroom during the national anthem, what I observed was hardly definitive. Nevertheless, if Geist had been a fly on the wall in the media-studies class I visited, I imagine he would have been surprised. At 9:20 A.M., the student-council president, speaking over the public-address system, read the preamble ("We live in a nation of freedom," etc.), and then, of the twenty-five students in the room, only one, a husky blond boy, stood at attention during a tinny rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Four boys made a point of leaving the room before the music began. Two others walked in a bit tardily, self-consciously surveyed the scene for a few seconds, and then slid into their chairs. Some kids rested their heads on their desks. Others had that vacant why-am-I-here-oh-yeah-this-is-high-school look. After the music stopped, and after the announcements about wrestling tryouts, the state soccer tournament, the Asian Club, the bake sale, the gospel choir, and the swing-dancing club, we talked about what it was all about.

"I believe in the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem, but if we have to do it day in, day out, it loses its value."

"It's promoting militarism and nationalism in the classroom, and I'm strongly against that."

"What's the difference between standing and sitting? Does standing mean that you appreciate it more?"

"If we were required to recite the pledge each day instead of listening to the national anthem, I would have found a stronger form of expression than leaving the room."

"Sitting isn't going against the government. When I sit during the national anthem, I'm probably thinking more about my country than those who stand. I'm thinking that I'm grateful to live in a nation where I have the ability to sit or stand. But I still disagree with many of the things our government is doing right now, and by sitting I'm making a statement to that effect."

"I know of another school in Wisconsin where they've tried hard to come up with a more musically interesting version of the anthem. There's a Whitney Houston version, I think, and a Marvin Gaye version, and a Jimi Hendrix version."

"I'd stand up for Jimi Hendrix."

Last week, the Madison School Board Recall Committee formally launched a petition campaign, starting a clock that gives them thirty days to collect the nearly thirty-two thousand signatures necessary to force Keys into a February election. February is soon enough that whoever runs against him will have no trouble remembering the closing paragraph of a profile of Keys that was published in the *Wisconsin State Journal* in late October: "Does he love his country? Well, he's glad he has the rights he does. Then he paused. 'I can't love anything that is so much in the abstract.'" Even Keys's allies winced at that, though the idea he was trying to convey could be found a couple of paragraphs earlier. Being patriotic, he said, is "not about what you say. It's what you do to help make life better for the people around you."

That Keys's primary skills aren't political is a boon to the vast number of Madisonians, left and right, for whom politics remains a diverting spectator sport. What other American community, after all, can boast a city council that debated and then passed, by an 11–8 vote, a resolution of support for the September 11th attack victims in which the phrase "thoughts and prayers" lost out to "thoughts and sympathies"? How connected, these days, is Madison to the reality beyond the city limits? I wonder if the bloody-minded urge for a fight is not a local phenomenon but a symptom of the anger that arises from our impatient uncertainty about how to prevail in the war against terrorism. In Madison, more than in most places, the unbloody culture war—political correctness and all that—has served as a curious catalyst. Underlying the noble rhetoric about what a valuable civics lesson Madison has witnessed, there's a less noble quality, a failure to acknowledge the self-indulgence implicit in all the carping. The semiotics of the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem and the schoolhouse are abstractions that one has the luxury to dwell upon when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and dense concentrations of grieving survivors happen to be several hundred miles away. "Democracy" is one way to define the dialectic. Other terms apply as well. ♦

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INDUSTRIAL ARTS

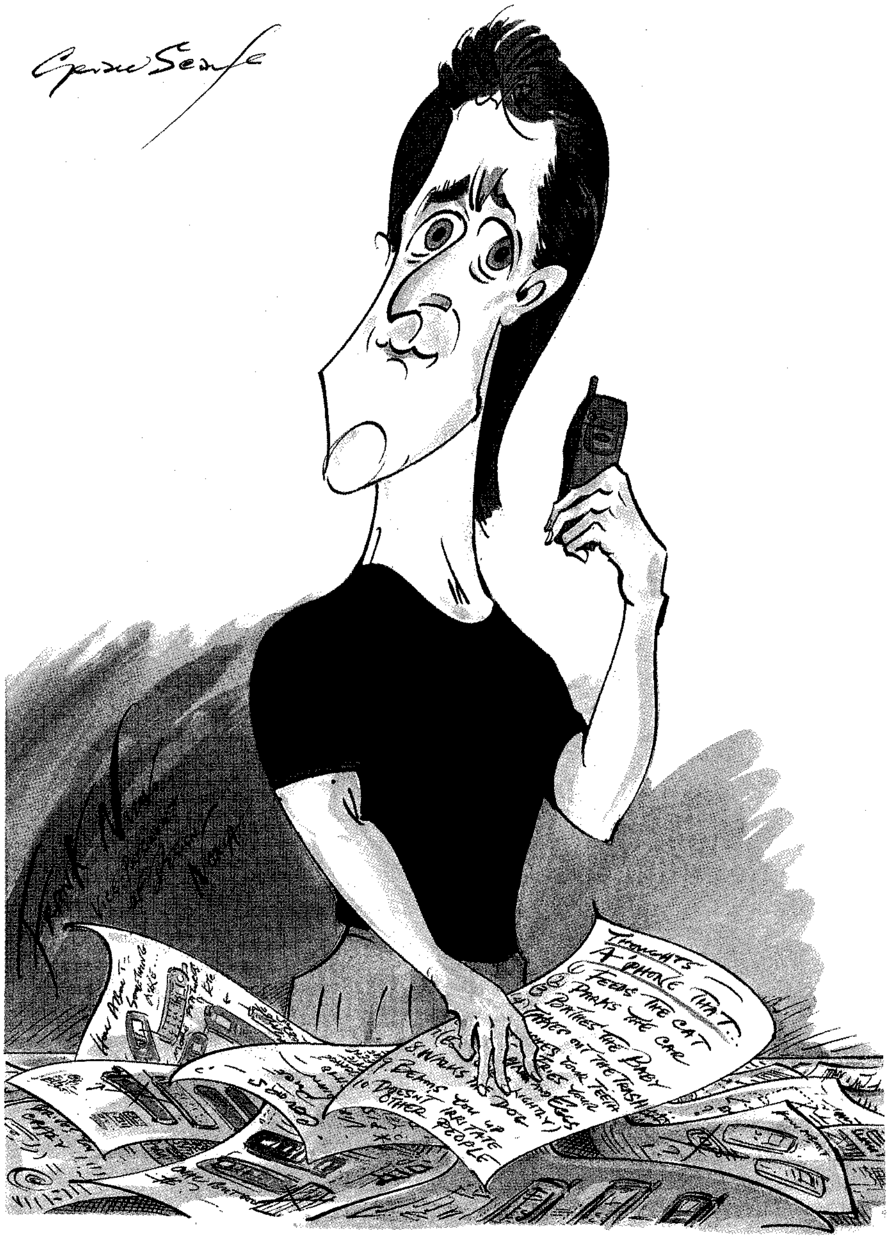
THE PHONE GUY

How Nokia designed what may be the best-selling cellular products on earth.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Frank Nuovo seems somehow out of place on the frosty streets of Helsinki. Not lost, exactly, and certainly not unhappy, but different. Surrounded everywhere by tall blonds, Nuovo is a short, dark, carefully assembled man who looks as if he might be Jerry Seinfeld's younger, slightly more credulous brother. He dresses in tastefully coördinated palettes of gray, olive, and black, and, as he settled into a seat at a café along one of the city's central esplanades late on a recent afternoon, he fell into what can only be described as a fugue state.

We had been playing a geek parlor game—one that only Nuovo could have devised. As people passed, he would guess, simply by glancing at them, what model cell phone they used. He was never wrong, and, because Finland is the world's first great wireless Utopia, he had plenty of material to work with. In Helsinki, nearly everyone carries a phone, and it often seems that people there are speaking, or sending each other text messages, every moment of every day. Three teen-agers approached, all with brightly colored, elliptical pieces of plastic attached to their ears. "The classic," Nuovo said, by which he meant that they were using the basic model introduced by Nokia three years ago—the 5100 series, whose removable faceplates created an international market for colorful, personalized phones. "Look," he said, pointing to a crisply dressed businessman. "That guy has to have the new version of the Communicator," a gizmo that lets people surf the Web, download news clips, fax, and chat. "I'll bet he got it the very week it came out." Suddenly, Nuovo stopped speaking, and his breathing slowed. His eyes fastened on a tall woman who had just broken into a run, about fifteen yards away. She was clearly angry. We could see her moving fast in high heels, screaming into her telephone, and carrying a large bag. It's not easy to do all that at once.



GERALD SCARFE

"Look at her," Nuovo said with genuine delight, as if he were an anthropologist who had stumbled upon some new tribal custom. "She has a 6110 rigged with a strap. I have never seen that in Europe." The 6110 has an illuminated high-graphics L.C.D. display, an infrared link to compatible devices, and thirty-five different ring tones; what it doesn't have is a strap. Yet, as the woman ran past us, we could see it fastened comfortably to the palm of her hand. "I'll be damned," Nuovo said. "The Japanese do this. So do the Koreans. They all have straps, and they decorate them in every conceivable way. But I have never seen that in Finland. I guess I'll have to start paying more attention."

Nuovo already pays a good deal of attention to the 6100 series, because he designed it. He also designed the slightly more prosaic 5100—it ranks among the most successful pieces of consumer electronics in the world—not to mention Nokia's gleaming, haute-couture 8800 phone, the minuscule, intensely fashionable digital accessory that

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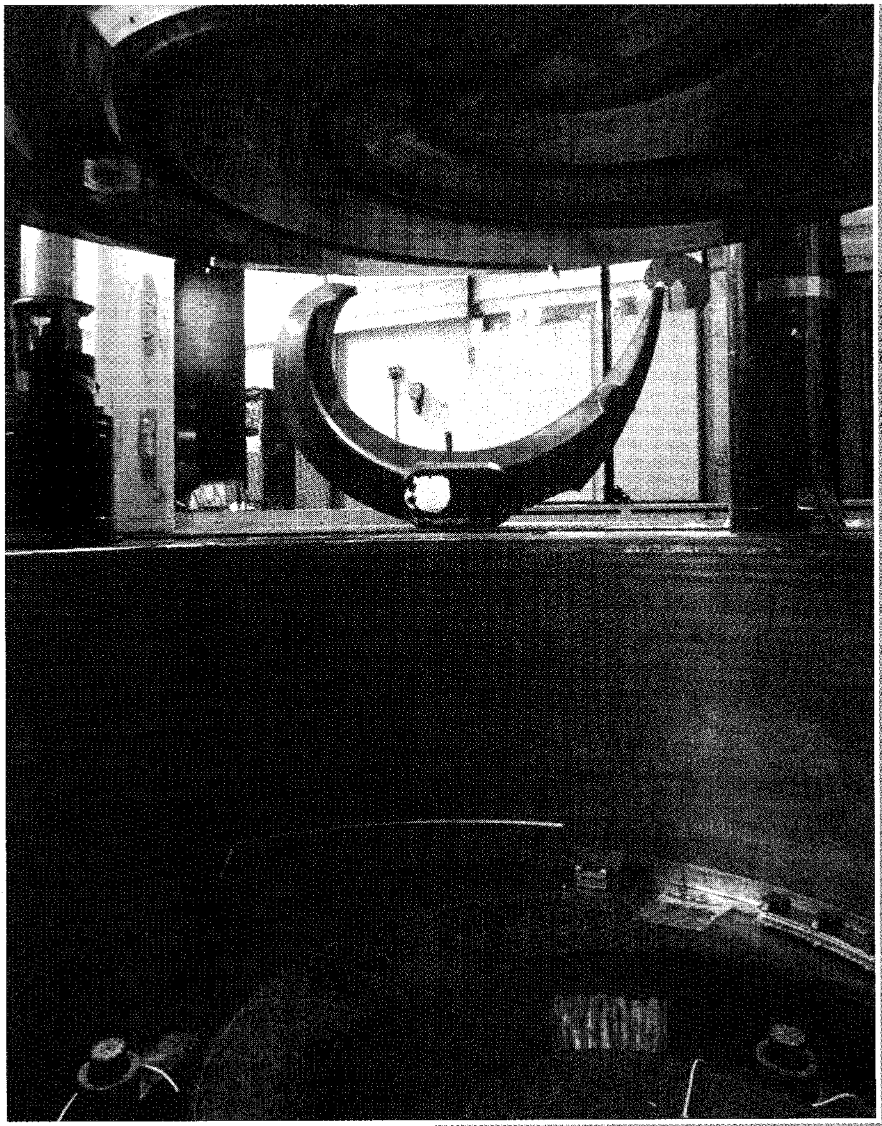
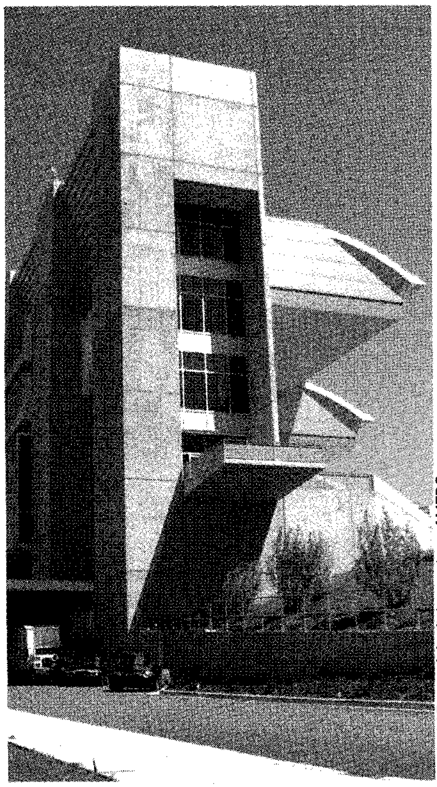
More than 700,000 new jobs have been created in Michigan in the past decade.

WHY MICHIGAN?

Whether newcomers want to put down roots in a university town or whether they're looking for upscale urban or suburban sites, they'll have a choice of communities to relocate to. Dependable telecommunications and high-speed Internet access have provided a surfeit of desirable locations where businesses can now thrive. Affordably priced homes, a reasonable cost of living, good salaries, and Michigan's outstanding educational system all contribute to attracting and keeping high-tech professionals here.



Michigan State University Cyclotron lab breaks down atoms in order to discover their structure, courtesy of Michigan State University



Van Andel Research Institute, courtesy of MEDC

But life's not all work and study in Michigan. With four-hundred beaches and eleven-thousand inland lakes, boating, swimming, and water sports are generally minutes from home. Golfers can tee off at any of the state's eight-hundred public courses, more than any other state in the nation. Come winter, Michigan is a prime skiing and snowboarding area, with mountains of snow and more than six thousand miles of groomed trails.

INITIATIVES AND INNOVATIONS

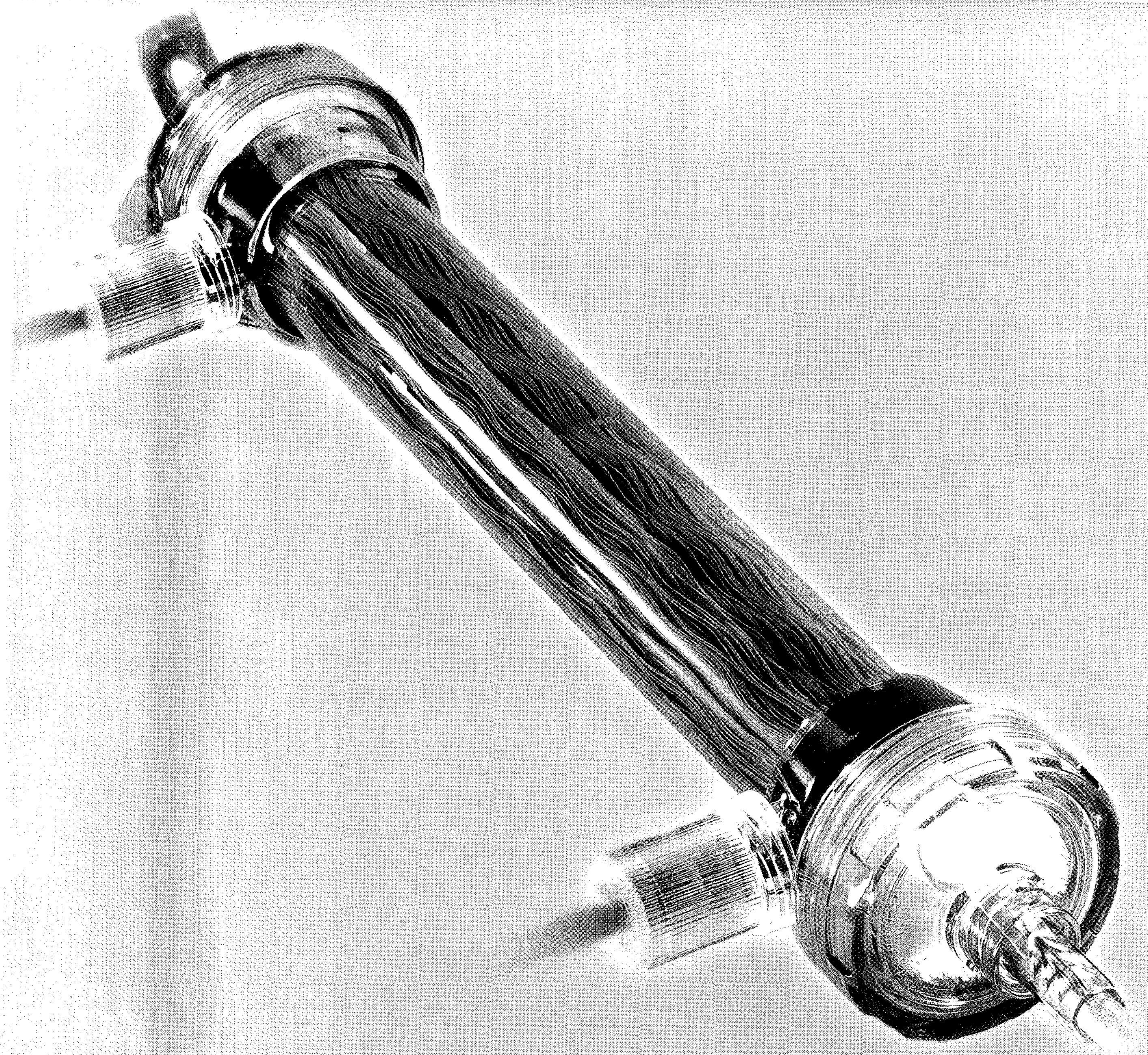
To stimulate the growth of technology-based businesses and jobs, MEDC has helped put the following initiatives in place:

- **SMARTZONES** Eleven business and research clusters equipped for high-tech operations have been created throughout the state.
- **LIFE SCIENCES CORRIDOR** This one-billion-dollar program will encourage

DRIVING THE ECONOMY

Michigan hasn't abandoned its auto industry roots, it has grafted them onto the electronic age. And that has given rise to a new industry—advanced manufacturing technology, a combination of manufacturing, information technology, design, and engineering—that ensures Michigan will remain the global center of automotive technology well into the twenty-first century.

The automotive industry not only maintains research and development centers in Michigan, but automakers also depend on virtual prototyping to speed product development and increase efficiency. Information technology is being used to create interactive navigational systems in vehicles and furnish them with voice-activation as well as advanced emergency and security features. What's more, the technical innovations pioneered by the auto industry are finding new applications in a variety of other industries.



We also make and commercialize biotechnology *breakthroughs, like the world's first* bio-artificial kidney.

This groundbreaking feat of tissue engineering is the result of research at the University of Michigan, funding by venture capitalists and commercialization by Nephros Therapeutics.

This invention may soon be saving thousands of patients with acute renal failure while reducing overall costs of healthcare.

Don't be surprised this giant step was made in Michigan. We're not only the proud home of America's auto innovators, we're now groundbreakers of America's new technology industries, like biotechnology.

This is just one example. For more information call **1.800.946.6829** or visit **www.michigan.org**.

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MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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Some 6,000 new businesses have been established in Michigan within the past four years.

biotechnology research and commercial projects over the next twenty years. Pfizer and Pharmacia are among the three hundred life science companies already engaged in major manufacturing and R.&D. activities. At the Van Andel Research Institute, a biomedical facility opened in May 2000 in Grand Rapids, scientists are exploring the function of genes and proteins, and the role they play in cancer, as well as developing new diagnostic techniques and treatments.

- **LINKMICHIGAN** This ambitious plan is transforming Michigan's telecommunications infrastructure into one of the nation's most robust.

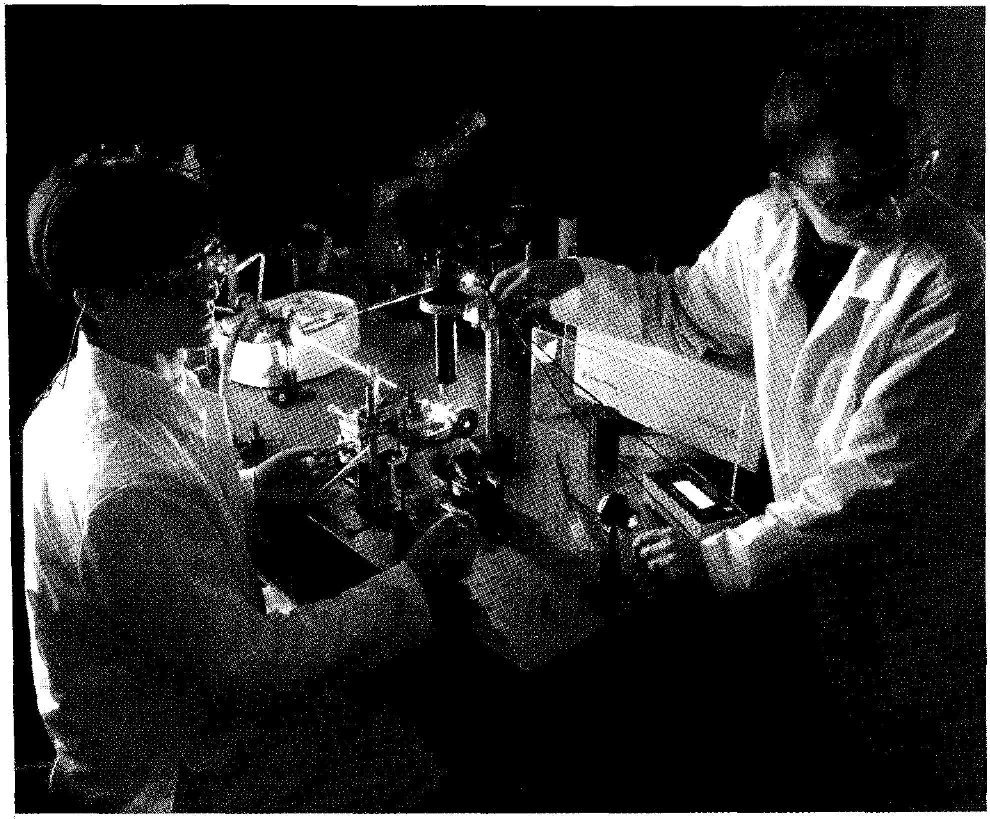
- **M-TEC**® Michigan Technical Education Centers, a sixty-million-dollar partnership between business, education, and industry, is training workers at eighteen locations for highly skilled positions.

- **RENAISSANCE ZONES** To spur private investment and job creation in economically distressed communities, more than twenty virtually tax-free areas have been created.

MICHIGAN'S SUCCESS

Despite the softening of the national economy, the state's unemployment rate has remained at or below five per cent and its population is growing after years of decline. Running counter to the national trend, Michigan continues to experience worker shortages, especially in technology-based fields. Much of the state's resilience can be attributed to a diverse economy that leading-credit-rating agencies esteem. Michigan is one of the few states to receive AAA bond ratings from both Standard and Poor's and Moody's.

Clearly, Michigan has morphed into an exciting new location for doing business. The strides it has made, the solid economic foundation it has built, and the performance and spirit of its workers make Michigan an exemplary location in which to conduct business, as well as work and live.



Biomedical engineering, courtesy of Michigan Technological University

SUCCESS STORIES

Companies cited below are examples of some of the new and exciting investments and expansions that are occurring across the state of Michigan.

SIEMENS AUTOMOTIVE
BUSINESS: Designs and builds electrical and electronic components and systems for vehicles.
EXPANSION: $67-million facility under construction in Auburn Hills.
PROJECTED NEW JOBS: 1,231 (800 directly employed by the company).

WHIRLPOOL CORPORATION
BUSINESS: World's largest manufacturer and marketer of home appliances.
EXPANSION: Relocation of technology innovation work force to St. Joseph and multiple initiatives in Benton Township.
PROJECTED NEW JOBS: 677 (385 directly employed by the company).

ACUSON CORPORATION
BUSINESS: Ultrasound medical imaging systems and other diagnostic systems.
EXPANSION: Satellite engineering and support operations center in Ann Arbor.
PROJECTED NEW JOBS: 263 (156 directly employed by the company).

THE POM GROUP
BUSINESS: Technology for fabricating three-dimensional metal objects from powder, using an industrial laser.
EXPANSION: Advanced Product Development Center in Auburn Hills.
PROJECTED NEW JOBS: 220 (75 directly employed by the company).

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the company introduced on the runways of Paris and Milan, rather than in the usual teleconferences for business journalists. In fact, starting with the Nokia 101, in 1992, the first truly global phone, and working from a decidedly un-Finnish office in a high-end strip mall in Southern California, Frank Nuovo has designed nearly every mobile phone that Nokia produces. If you don't count fast-food items like cans of Coca-Cola or ephemera like Kleenex, Nokia phones may be the best-selling products on earth.

That makes Nuovo the Henry Ford—or, at least, the Calvin Klein—of cellular communication. More than any other person, Nuovo has set forth a vision of the mobile phone as personal accessory—a fashion item like a watch or a pen. He is convinced that within a few years having just one phone will seem as odd to most people as owning a single pair of shoes. A decade ago, cell phones were mainly curios for the rich; fewer than ten million people had used one. Next year, the figure will inch past a billion. In the United States, where cell-phone use lags far behind Europe, more than a hundred and thirty million people will have service contracts by December. Perhaps no industrial product of any kind has had a more rapid effect on a greater number of people. "Nokia started to take off just as the Soviet Union was falling apart," J. P. Roos, a professor of social policy at the University of Helsinki who studies the effect of cell phones on society, told me. "Finland was in desperate shape, and the mobile phone created a new culture." It became the symbol of a world in which people wanted to be independent and yet connected. "I don't know how you label that culture," Roos says. "It is clearly about style and form, but when you slip this small piece of plastic into your hands and see what it has done—well, I don't think the automobile had a bigger effect on the way people live, or what they expect from their lives."

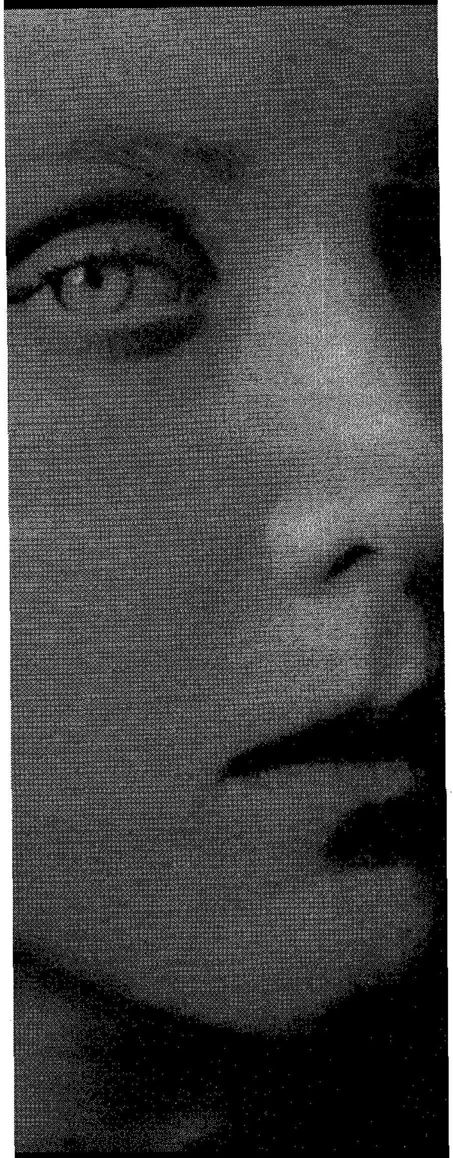
When I first met with Nuovo, at his office near Los Angeles, I had intended to ask about the mechanics of industrial design: how does one make a piece of equipment that will find its way into the hands of a sizable portion of the world's population? "My only goal is to create something people need to have," Nuovo told me. "They need to have it because it's useful and because it improves their lives in some clear way. If it's a lovely phone, they will want it more—for the same reason a woman buys a fabulous dress, or maybe for the reason you choose a particular car. You might need the dress or the car. But you also have to *want* it."

Although Nuovo is the vice-president in charge of design for Nokia, he has never moved to Finland (despite many requests from his bosses), because he believes that Los Angeles, as the center of the American image industry and of its automotive soul, is the place where beauty and style matter most. Nuovo is a former jazz drummer from Monterey who grew up worshipping such American icons as Charlie Parker. He is forty, and was raised, he says, in a world dominated by "The Jetsons," "Lost in Space," and "Star Trek." "The fascination with gadgets and the interaction with cool little things was a basic part of my life. My age is the space age, the age of incredible instruments. And they are beautiful, by the way. They don't really work if they are not beautiful."

After graduating from Pasadena's Art Center College of Design, Nuovo got a job at Designworks/USA (which is now an in-house design shop for BMW). There he became involved in a project to improve the ergonomics of air-traffic-control consoles. ("That's a system where design isn't just nice, it's vital—you *really* don't want to hit the wrong button by mistake.") He also designed sewing machines, car dashboards, and patio furniture. He started working for Nokia as a consultant when he was twenty-eight. "It was Christmas, everyone was gone, and a company named Nokia called. I had no idea where they were from. I guess I assumed Japan. At that time, big bag phones, the kind you'd carry in a suitcase, were all we had. But I had been working on dashboards, and they were always on my mind. So when they asked me to design a car phone I said sure, why not?"

Nuovo's California office is a sort of hidden Disneyland for gadget freaks. There is no Nokia sign on the door, or

Sarah Moon
COÏNCIDENCES



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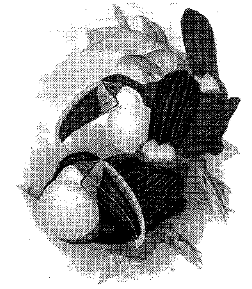

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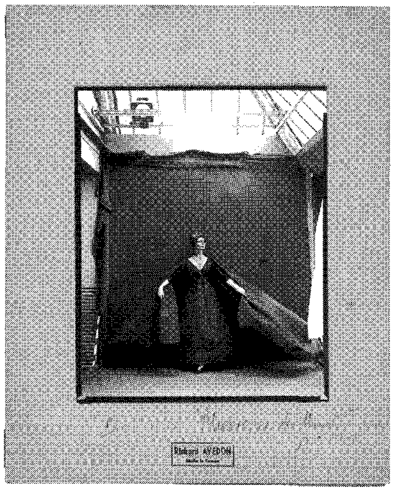

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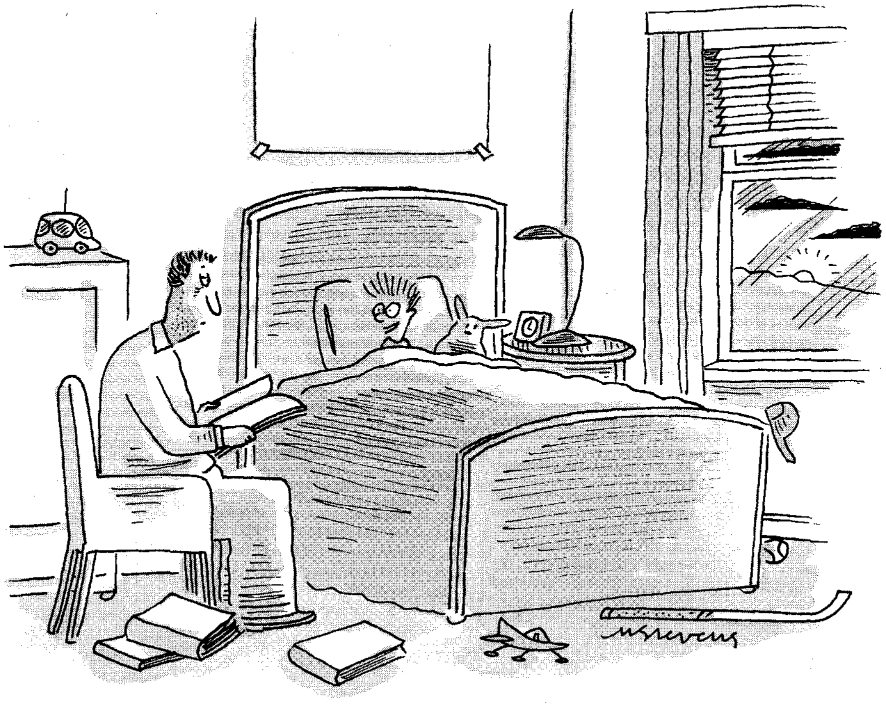
on the building. Nuovo worries about security, and industrial spies. He asked me not to print the name of the town where he and his team of designers, color experts, and materials scientists work. Inside, the studio looks as if it might belong to a clothing designer. Drawings of the slinkiest creations by Versace and Chanel are pinned on the wall, as are sketches of the most outrageously futuristic-looking cars, bicycles, even Rollerblades.

Nuovo is particularly proud of his vast collection of pens, all arranged like trophies on the shelves. Some are expensive and rare, made of titanium, cork, or single strips of unusual wood; others are cheap, the familiar sticks of injection-molded plastic. Nuovo loves pens because they are "simple, simple, simple," he says. "They do one thing, and they come in an almost endless assortment of designs. Just like phones."

In general, Nuovo favors bubbles and elliptical shapes, the aerodynamic icons of speed. Phones are everywhere in his studio: in cradles, on desks, on the wall. Most are prototypes. He produces the earliest versions out of wax on what is essentially a 3-D printer—but not before he draws them. Nuovo sketches phones habitually. In fact, during meetings Nuovo may often take notes, but he always draws telephones. When he's starting to design a new model, he typically roughs out his first drafts on anything—an envelope, a notebook, the back of a fax. Then he puts the design on a piece of tissue-thin paper to show his colleagues in L.A., often leaving the next step of the process—the refinements made possible by computer-aided design—to them.

"In 1991, everyone had boxy little phones with rectangular displays," he said. "Most of our competitors did all they could to pack in every possible feature. I thought we needed space. Believe me, it was a very radical thing to put empty space on a phone then." At this point, Nuovo grabbed my phone, which is very small. "Feel the ridge between these keys. They are actually touching, but you can feel the distance because of the topography. They are the best keys for the size that you can have. Many people want a very small product. But, obviously, if you do an ergonomic study you will get into something *this* size." He reached across the table to grab a larger telephone. "You can do 'perfect reach' studies, and if you take the largest person with huge hands and the smallest person with tiny hands you can find an optimal average. We hit a sweet spot between large and small that accommodates all sizes—it's the 6110. But if you hit only that medium every-



"It's dawn, Dad. Want to knock off for breakfast?"

thing will look that way all the time. It's boring. So there is always this clash between form and function in every design. Look at women's shoes: purely for the sake of style, women will wear shoes that are expensive and painful."

He reached for a gold version of the 8850, a costly little phone that was introduced this year, in Asia, and has a cult following. "This never made it to market in the U.S. When this first came out, it was going for twenty-eight hundred dollars. It was unbelievable what was happening. Take this stylistically—I call this the pressure wave." Nuovo caressed two little ridges on the lower half of the phone. You wouldn't even notice them if you were not looking for them. "Think about cars, aerodynamics, wind tunnels. Look at our styling here—it is so copied around the planet. The language we have put forward is about the emotion of speed and increasing velocity. The influence of the auto is there, of course. But it's not about cars. It's about movement, and it's about"—he paused before delivering his mantra—"the attempt to *do one thing well.*"

Nuovo thinks that too often designers overlook this consideration. For years, the companies that make mobile phones—and many of their customers—have pursued a sort of Grand Unified Theory of Gadgetry, seeking a phone that will do everything: keep schedules, record memos, play music, surf the Web. "Today, the kids are all obsessed with convergence," he said. "Young industrial designers often want to be modular. They want to make vacuum cleaners that can mix drinks and lawnmowers that serve coffee. But a product needs to be *about* something. It can't be about ten things. I would rather have five phones that do five things than one that does a little bit of everything. Right now, that seems strange to many people. But soon it won't. How many brilliant combos are there? Can you think of a more brilliant combination than a pocket and a phone?"

Nokia is the most Finnish of companies, and, to an uncanny degree, its history reflects the transformation of Finland itself, from an insignificant duchy to one of the world's most wired—and wireless—countries. Nokia—and the town of the same name—was founded more than a hundred and thirty years ago, near the southwestern Finnish city of Tampere. It began as a producer of paper and pulp, and at one time was a leading manufacturer of rubber boots. (These are considered collector's items among the Wellington-boot crowd; occasionally, a pair is offered for sale on eBay.) It has also produced tires, television sets, and electricity. By the early nineties, however, Nokia decided to focus on cellular communications. It was seen as a risky decision, but the first call using G.S.M., or Global System for Mobile Communications, was placed from a Nokia phone in Finland, in 1991. G.S.M. became the technology that permitted phones to roam throughout the world, and Nokia helped create it. It also manufactured the first digital phone. The company now accounts for more than sixty per cent of the activity on the Finnish stock market. It employs fifty-eight thousand people, and its headquarters, Nokia House, is situated in the center of Espoo, which is Finland's second-largest city and, with an almost comically large fleet of Volvos and sleek city buses, perhaps the most upper-middle-class company town in the world. Nokia House—a giant latticework of ecologically friendly glass and natural woods—seems to embody the company's vision of itself. The building's airy, open space is anchored by flights of circular stairs, and during the time I spent there I kept waiting for somebody to trip on one of them and plummet to the cafeteria floor, because people never appear to look where they are going. It seems to be an assignment for every employee to walk around at all times clutching the latest piece of digital technology, talking to himself, staring at the video screen in his hand, or rapidly sending text messages.

For better or worse, the company has come to dominate economic life in Finland just as completely as the Soviet Union once did. Nokia has nine factories—three in the Americas, three in Europe, and three in Asia. The most advanced of them is a four-hundred-and-twenty-thousand-square-foot plant in Salo, about a hundred kilometres west of Helsinki. As it happened, I went there to meet another American, Erik Anderson, who is in charge of pro-

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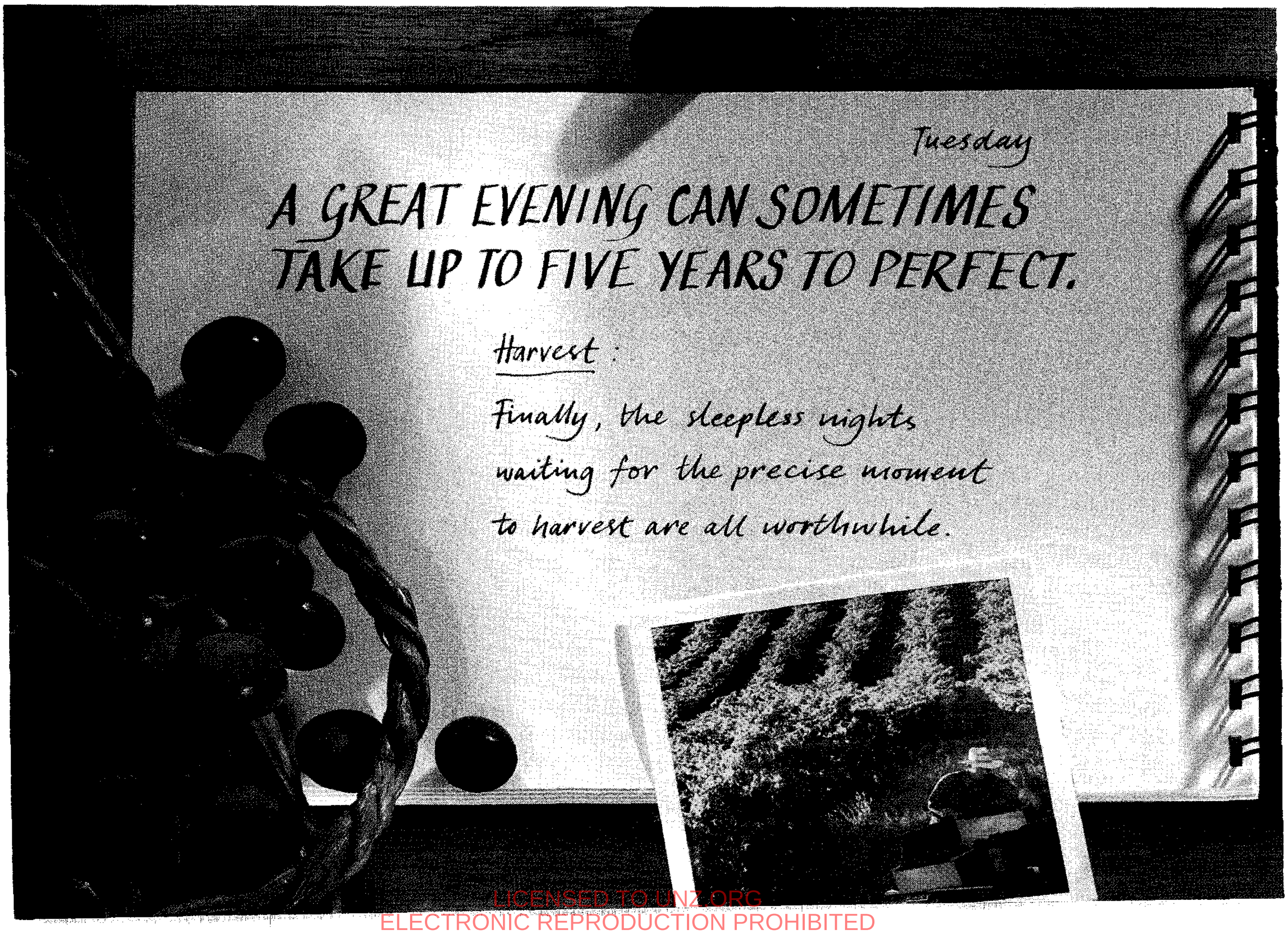
ducing the phones that Nuovo designs. Anderson is a wiry, intense man with an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from Princeton; he is completing a Ph.D. in Renaissance architectural history at Harvard. Anderson is married to a Finnish woman and has lived in Finland for twelve years, although he occasionally takes sabbaticals to continue research on the sixteenth-century architect Andrea Palladio.

A clothing designer can sketch a dress, order the fabric, and tell a tailor how to cut it. Making an industrial device isn't that simple. Most cell phones have several hundred parts, and to produce them by the million requires a complicated collaboration. As I took a seat opposite Anderson in one of the conference rooms not far from the factory floor, he slid a sheaf of papers across the table to me. "Our instruction manual," he said with a wink. It consisted of excerpts from Leon Battista Alberti's classic Renaissance treatise "On the Art of Building." Before we got to Alberti, though, Anderson started talking about Vitruvius, the only ancient writer on architecture whose major work survives, and his three pillars. "*Firmitas, utilitas, venustas*," Anderson said, practically chanting. "Firmness—it stands. Utility—it works, it's ergonomics. And *venustas*—beauty. A classical building had to be beautiful. They are all three equal. That is what is classical. They have to be in balance."

Anderson reached for his briefcase and turned it upside down; at least a dozen telephones came tumbling out. He grabbed the oldest among them, the nine-year-old 101. "See the space here?" He pointed to a gap between the numeric keypad and the scrolling keys above it. "Frank did it with his own hand," he said. "Look at the racetrack, a curved oval shape. It was subtle. You wouldn't notice it consciously." He rubbed his thumb slowly across every line and contour. "Look at the earpiece. It has three holes. But what shape are the holes? Three *ovals*. Look at the microphone. It's a little *oval*. It cost money to make those holes into oval shapes. A circle would have been cheaper. You don't notice it—but you see it, you feel it. The phone creates a feeling of coherence, of understanding, which is both intellectual and emotional. It is a sense of organic rightness." He glanced over at me. "You think this is a bunch of crap, don't you?" he asked, amused as my eyes moved from the cell phone to Alberti's essay, passages of which Anderson had underlined. "What could making a goddam cell phone have to do with the Renaissance?"

The question had occurred to me. I looked at what he had highlighted in Alberti's essay: "All care, all diligence, all financial consideration must be directed to insuring that what is built is useful, commodious, yes—but also embellished and wholly graceful." Alberti was writing about building in ancient Egypt and Greece. Egypt was rich and powerful. Anderson picked up the essay and read aloud: "Next came Greece, a country where upright and noble minds flour-


Tuesday
A GREAT EVENING CAN SOMETIMES TAKE UP TO FIVE YEARS TO PERFECT.
Harvest:
Finally, the sleepless nights waiting for the precise moment to harvest are all worthwhile.

ished, and the desire for embellishing what was theirs was evident. . . . It was their part to surpass through ingenuity those whose wealth they could not rival."

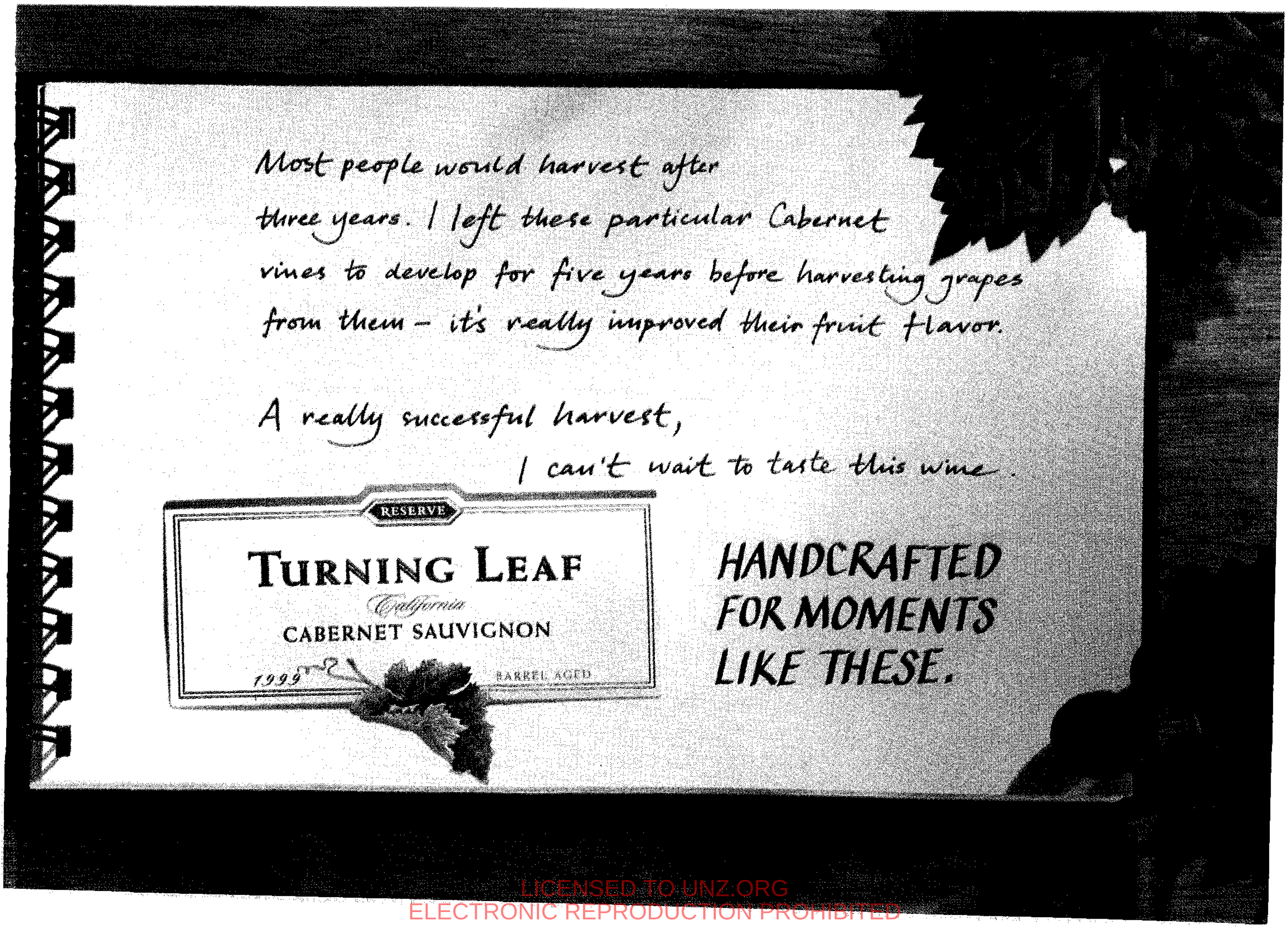
Anderson leaped out of his chair. "Don't you see? The Egyptians were Motorola in 1989. They were so strong and so powerful we could never beat them head on. We had to find another way. We had to use ingenuity, because they had wealth we could not rival." He did have a point. In the early nineties, Motorola dominated the mobile-phone market. In 1993, for example, Motorola sold more than a third of all the cell phones in the world. Today, in a remarkable reversal, Nokia sells more than a third of the world's cell phones. In fact, Nokia's sales are greater than those of its three closest rivals combined: Motorola, Ericsson, and Siemens.

"Originally, we had one phone—the phone Frank designed," Anderson said. "And we tried to make it that one perfect phone. By 1993, I was on leave, working on my dissertation. I realized then that making one perfect phone wasn't going to work for us. We needed to make many perfect phones, and they needed to be different.

"There is a bar in Salo. Rikala, it's called. It's a seedy place, and Nokia engineers always went there on Friday nights. They would get there and take their big phones off their belts, slap them down on the bar, and they would drink beer and eat peanuts until 4 A.M. Then one of the engineers would say, 'Oh, my God, which is my phone?' How would they know? They all had the same damn phone in the same color with the same ring. So they went out and painted the phones themselves with high-quality car paint. It isn't so glamorous, but that's where the route to color and fashion phones begins—in a bar in Salo."

Anderson returned to his desk and started to rummage through his pyramid of phones. "Any growing market will segment—it's an economic law of nature. First, you have a heavy black mobile phone. Then a red and a green one. Then you have small phones and phones with ring tones. The first segments in cell phones were people who preferred longer battery life and others who preferred smaller phones. Battery weight long ago ceased to be a problem. The antenna could be made smaller and often tucked inside the phone. And, as technology improves, variations become easier.

"This old 'good, better, best' segmentation is archaic. We are never going to say that if you are a little old lady you can't drive a Ferrari. That's nonsense. If you want to own something beautiful, is that really irrational? You try to maintain your market share by offering the best range of products." He was up on his feet again, but this time with a frown. "Seems simple, right? Well, if you make too many phones you go bankrupt. If you make lots of products but none are the best in their class, you will go bankrupt. If you make one good product, you might do really well with it, but there won't be enough profit, so



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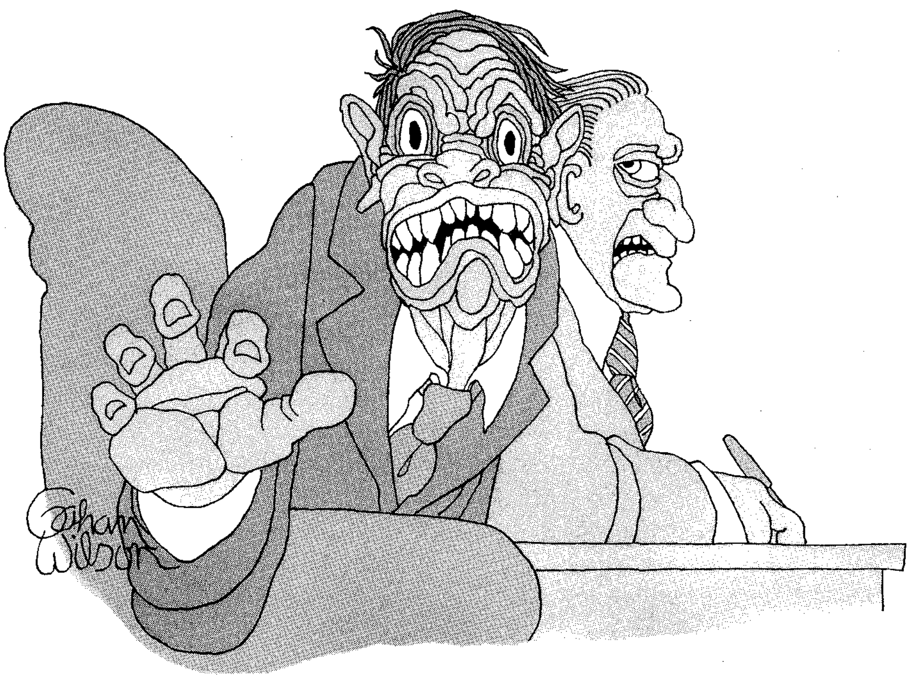

"I've told you not to do that to the jury!"

• •

you'll go bankrupt. In the end, it all really comes back to balance. Alberti was right."

Finland has embraced wireless technology more completely than any other country. That puts it in the vanguard of the mobile revolution, but it has also turned the country into a perfect laboratory in which to study the effects such rootlessness can cause. Each morning, tens of thousands of moms load phones, along with homework, into the backpacks of schoolchildren. There's a sense that it is no longer permissible to be "off line." People expect their phone calls and messages to be returned instantly. Social scientists believe that attention spans have been diminished, and so has tolerance for any kind of delay.

One afternoon, I went to visit the social anthropologist Kaisa Coogan in her apartment a few miles from the center of Helsinki. Not long ago, Coogan and a colleague completed a study of how such ubiquitous cell-phone use has affected relationships among teen-agers and between them and their parents. "It has completely changed the way young people communicate with parents," she told me. "I have called it Remote Parenting. People go to work and the kids come home late and the parents are asleep. So what they have is a virtual link. They can call each other and send S.M.S. to each other." S.M.S. stands for "short-message service," which dispatches text messages of a hundred and sixty characters or less. By early 2000, G.S.M. phones sent more than three billion messages throughout the world each month. By the end of this year, that figure will have grown to thirty billion—nearly a billion messages a day.

"The parents think they know where the kids are because they can send a message. They don't necessarily see the kids' friends at all. Ever. They don't call to the land-line number. They call directly on each other's cell phones. So the parent is cut out." In her study, conducted in and around Helsinki over the past two years, she found that every participant between sixteen and eighteen years of age had a cell phone. "There are even four-year-old kids who carry phones here. The kids are in the park, playing outside, and the mother doesn't see them, so they call. Maybe half the ten-year-olds have phones. That was last year; I'm sure the number is higher now."

Later that evening, I asked Frank Nuovo whether he saw a darker side to this reliance on such a powerful new technology. "Of course," he said. "I am not one of those who feels technology is always blameless. But surely the parent can make decisions about what is appropriate for a child. Cars cause pollution, and I don't like that. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't have cars. We have to use technology responsibly."

These days, Nuovo is preoccupied with the next great thing. He won't talk about it—except to say that it represents a "paradigm shift" in the way phones will be used. Nokia has said publicly that it expects phones with built-in cameras to be an important advance toward a system of rapid and constant connection, involving text, video, and the Internet. When we were in California, Nuovo showed me several models that, when the network allows it, will permit people to send streaming video to whomever they like.

On the street in Helsinki, I asked him if he was worried that video phones and other added features will harm the simple aesthetic that he and others at Nokia seem to value. "Not if they are done the right way," he said. "Cramming features in doesn't work—but ignoring technological possibilities doesn't, either." In fact, Nokia almost passed up the opportunity to include S.M.S. in its phones. Now many people buy them just for that feature.

We walked into a phone shop. For Nuovo, it might as well have been Toys R Us. "Look at this phone," he said. It was a Siemens SL45, one of the newest and most feature-laden phones on the market. "It's a technophone. You can synch it with your computer and it has MP3 and God knows what else. But why do people buy it? Because it looks cool and it works well as a phone. Instead of talking about convergence, I see a future much like this." He waved his arms about the store, pointing at dozens of models. "They are all different. Like sneakers, bikes, motorcycles, and cars—those things all take people places. But do sneakers do what a car does? Of course not. Does a bike? Do you want *one* of them? No. You need them all." The look in his eyes was somewhere between giddiness and lust. "That's all I'm saying. You are going to need all of them." ♦

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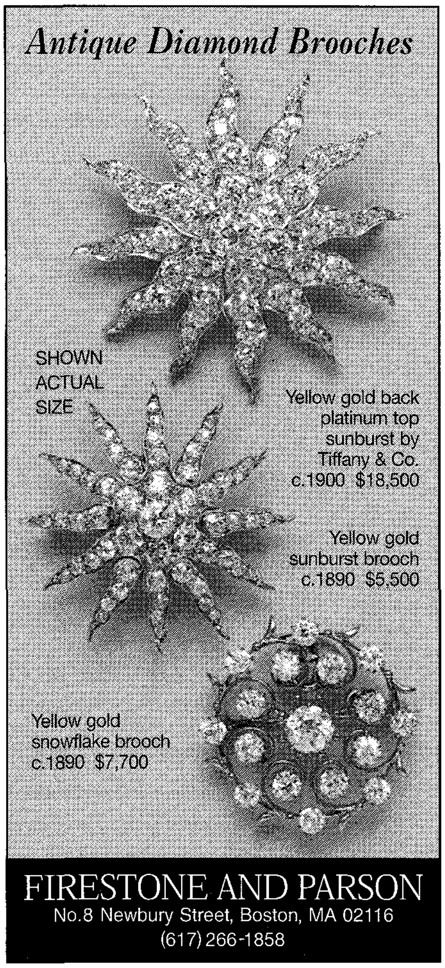
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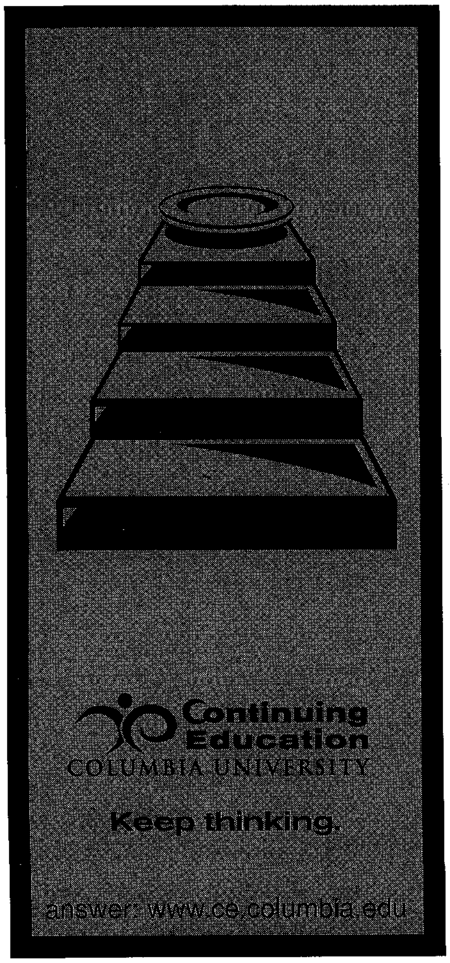
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ANNALS OF TECHNOLOGY

SMALLER

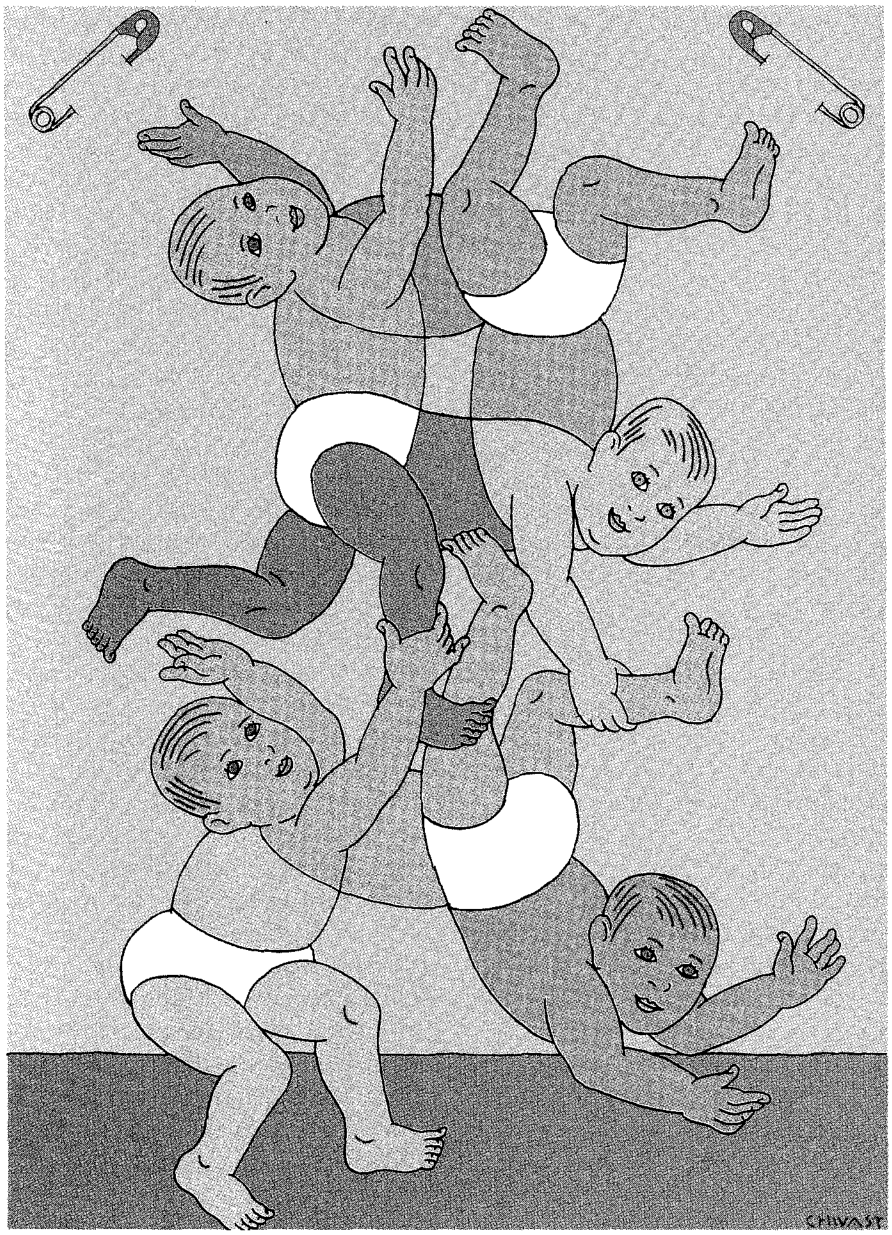
The disposable diaper and the meaning of progress.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

The best way to explore the mystery of the Huggies Ultratrim disposable diaper is to unfold it and then cut it in half, widthwise, across what is known as the diaper’s chassis. At Kimberly-Clark’s Lakeview plant, in Neenah, Wisconsin, where virtually all the Huggies in the Midwest are made, there is a quality-control specialist who does this all day long, culling diapers from the production line, pinning them up against a lightboard, and carefully dismembering them with a pair of scissors. There is someone else who does a “visual cull,” randomly picking out Huggies and turning them over to check for flaws. But a surface examination tells you little. A diaper is not like a computer that makes satisfying burbling noises from time to time, hinting at great inner complexity. It feels like papery underwear wrapped around a thin roll of Cottonelle. But peel away the soft fabric on the top side of the diaper, the liner, which receives what those in the trade delicately refer to as the “insult.” You’ll find a layer of what’s called polyfilm, which is thinner than a strip of Scotch tape. This layer is one of the reasons the garment stays dry: it has pores that are large enough to let air flow in, so the diaper can breathe, but small enough to keep water from flowing out, so the diaper doesn’t leak.

Or run your hands along that liner. It feels like cloth. In fact, the people at Kimberly-Clark make the liner out of a special form of plastic, a polyresin. But they don’t melt the plastic into a sheet, as one would for a plastic bag. They spin the resin into individual fibres, and then use the fibres to create a kind of microscopic funnel, channelling the insult toward the long, thick rectangular pad that runs down the center of the chassis, known as the absorbent core. A typical insult arrives at a rate of seven millilitres a second, and might total seventy millilitres of fluid. The liner can clear that insult in less than twenty seconds. The core can hold three or more of those insults, with a chance of leakage in the single digits. The baby’s skin will remain almost perfectly dry, and that is critical, because prolonged contact between the baby and the insult (in particular, ammonium hydroxide, a breakdown product of urine) is what causes diaper rash. And all this will be accomplished by a throwaway garment measuring, in the newborn size, just seven by thirteen inches. This is the mystery of the modern disposable diaper: how does something so small do so much?

Thirty-seven years ago, the Silicon Valley pioneer Gordon Moore made a famous prediction. The number of transistors that engineers could fit onto a microchip, he said, would double every two years. It seemed like a foolhardy claim: it was not clear that you could keep making transistors smaller and smaller indefinitely. It also wasn’t clear that it would make sense to do so. Most of the time when we make things smaller, after all, we pay a price. A smaller car is cheaper and more fuel-efficient, and easier to park and maneuver, but it will never be as safe as a larger car. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, the transistor radio was all the rage; it could fit inside your pocket and run on a handful of batteries. But, because it was so small, the sound was terrible, and virtually all the other mini-electronics turn out to be similarly imperfect. Tiny cell phones are hard to dial. Tiny televisions are hard to watch. In making an object smaller, we typically compromise its performance. The remarkable thing about chips, though, was that there was no drawback: if you could fit more and more transistors onto a microchip, then instead of using ten or twenty or a hundred microchips for a task you could use just one. This meant, in turn, that you could fit microchips in all kinds of places (such



Diapers are like microchips, in that they got better as they got smaller.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

as cellular phones and laptops) that you couldn't before, and, because you were using one chip and not a hundred, computer power could be had at a fraction of the price, and because chips were now everywhere and in such demand they became even cheaper to make—and so on and so on. Moore's Law, as it came to be called, describes that rare case in which there is no trade-off between size and performance. Microchips are what might be termed a perfect innovation.

In the past twenty years, diapers have got smaller and smaller, too. In the early eighties, they were three times bulkier than they are now, thicker and substantially wider in the crotch. But in the mid-eighties Huggies and Procter & Gamble's Pampers were reduced in bulk by fifty per cent; in the mid-nineties they shrank by a third or so; and in the next few years they may shrink still more. It seems reasonable that there should have been a downside to this, just as there was to the shrinking of cars and radios: how could you reduce the amount of padding in a diaper and not, in some way, compromise its ability to handle an insult? Yet, as diapers got smaller, they got better, and that fact elevates the diaper above nearly all the thousands of other products on the supermarket shelf.

Kimberly-Clark's Lakeview plant is a huge facility, just down the freeway from Green Bay. Inside, it is as immaculate as a hospital operating room. The walls and floors have been scrubbed white. The stainless-steel machinery gleams. The employees are dressed in dark-blue pants, starched light-blue button-down shirts, and tissue-paper caps. There are rows of machines in the plant, each costing more than fifteen million dollars—a dizzying combination of conveyor belts and whirling gears and chutes stretching as long as a city block and creating such a din that everyone on the factory floor wears headsets and communicates by radio. Computers monitor a million data points along the way, insuring that each of those components is precisely cut and attached according to principles and processes and materials protected, on the Huggies Ultratrim alone, by hundreds of patents. At the end of the line, the Huggies come gliding out of the machine, stacked upright, one after another in an endless row, looking like exquisitely formed slices of white bread in a toast rack. For years, because of Moore's Law, we have considered the microchip the embodiment of the technological age. But if the diaper is also a perfect innovation, doesn't it deserve a place beside the chip?

The modern disposable diaper was invented twice, first by Victor Mills and then by Carlyle Harmon and Billy Gene Harper. Mills worked for Procter & Gamble, and he was a legend. Ivory soap used to be made in an expensive and time-consuming batch-by-batch method. Mills figured out a simpler, continuous process. Duncan Hines cake mixes used to have a problem blending flour, sugar, and shortening in a consistent mixture. Mills introduced the machines used for milling soap, which ground the ingredients much more finely than before, and the result was New, Improved Duncan Hines cake mix. Ever wonder why Pringles, unlike other potato chips, are all exactly the same shape? Because they are made like soap: the potato is ground into a slurry, then pressed, baked, and wrapped—and that was Victor Mills's idea, too.

In 1957, Procter & Gamble bought the Charmin Paper Company, of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Mills was told to think of new products for the paper business. Since he was a grandfather—and had always hated washing diapers—he thought of a disposable diaper. "One of the early researchers told me that among the first things they did was go

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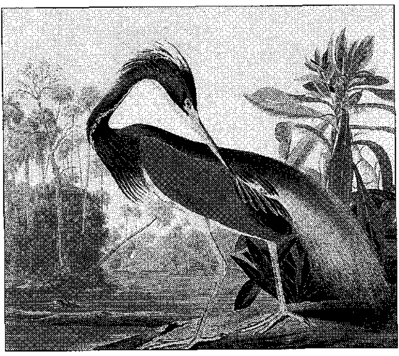

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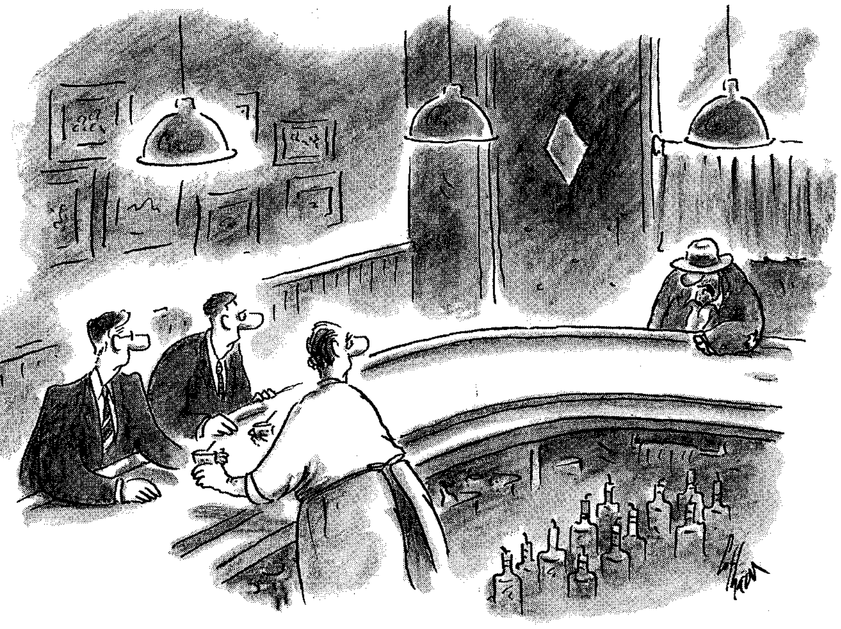
out to a toy store and buy one of those Betsy Wetsy-type dolls, where you put water in the mouth and it comes out the other end," Ed Rider, the head of the archives department at Procter & Gamble, says. "They brought it back to the lab, hooked up its legs on a treadmill to make it walk, and tested diapers on it." The end result was Pampers, which were launched in Peoria, in 1961. The diaper had a simple rectangular shape. Its liner, which lay against the baby's skin, was made of rayon. The outside material was plastic. In between were multiple layers of crêped tissue. The diaper was attached with pins and featured what was known as a Z fold, meaning that the edges of the inner side were pleated, to provide a better fit around the legs.

In 1968, Kimberly-Clark brought out Kimbies, which took the rectangular diaper and shaped it to more closely fit a baby's body. In 1976, Procter & Gamble brought out Luvs, which elasticized the leg openings to prevent leakage. But diapers still adhered to the basic Millsian notion of an absorbent core made out of paper—and that was a problem. When paper gets wet, the fluid soaks right through, which makes diaper rash worse. And if you put any kind of pressure on paper—if you squeeze it, or sit on it—it will surrender some of the water it has absorbed, which creates further difficulties, because a baby, in the usual course of squirming and crawling and walking, might place as much as five kilopascals of pressure on the absorbent core of a diaper. Diaper-makers tried to address this shortcoming by moving from crêped tissue to what they called fluff, which was basically finely shredded cellulose. Then they began to compensate for paper's failing by adding more and more of it, until diapers became huge. But they now had Moore's Law in reverse: in order to get better, they had to get bigger—and bigger still wasn't very good.

Carlyle Harmon worked for Johnson & Johnson and Billy Gene Harper worked for Dow Chemical, and they had a solution. In 1966, each filed separate but virtually identical patent applications, proposing that the best way to solve the diaper puzzle was with a peculiar polymer that came in the form of little pepperlike flakes and had the remarkable ability to absorb up to three hundred times its weight in water.

In the Dow patent, Harper and his team described how they sprinkled two grams of the superabsorbent polymer between two twenty-inch-square sheets of nylon broadcloth, and then quilted the nylon layers together. The makeshift diaper was "thereafter put into use in personal management of a baby of approximately 6 months age." After four hours, the diaper was removed. It now weighed a hundred and twenty



"Excuse me, but it's important to get those drinks to those who need them the most."

grams, meaning the flakes had soaked up sixty times their weight in urine.

Harper and Harmon argued that it was quite unnecessary to solve the paper problem by stuffing the core of the diaper with thicker and thicker rolls of shredded pulp. Just a handful of superabsorbent polymer would do the job. Thus was the modern diaper born. Since the mid-eighties, Kimberly-Clark and Procter & Gamble have made diapers the Harper and Harmon way, pulling out paper and replacing it with superabsorbent polymer. The old, paper-filled diaper could hold, at most, two hundred and seventy-five millilitres of fluid, or a little more than a cup. Today, a diaper full of superabsorbent polymer can handle as much as five hundred millilitres, almost twice that. The chief characteristic of the Mills diaper was its simplicity: the insult fell directly into the core. But the presence of the polymer has made the diaper far more complex. It takes longer for the polymer than it does paper to fully absorb an insult, for instance. So another component was added, the acquisition layer, between the liner and the core. The acquisition layer acts like blotting paper, holding the insult while the core slowly does its work, and distributing the fluid over its full length.

Diaper researchers sometimes perform what is called a re-wet test, where they pour a hundred millilitres of fluid onto the surface of a diaper and then apply a piece of filter paper to the diaper liner with five kilopascals of pressure—the average load a baby would apply to a diaper during ordinary use. In a contemporary superabsorbent diaper, like a Huggies or a Pampers, the filter paper will come away untouched after one insult. After two insults, there might be 0.1 millilitres of fluid on the paper. After three insults, the diaper will surrender, at most, only two millilitres of moisture—which is to say that, with the aid of superabsorbents, a pair of Huggies or Pampers can effortlessly hold, even under pressure, a baby's entire night's work.

The heir to the legacy of Billy Gene Harper at Dow Chemical is Fredric Buchholz, who works in Midland, Michigan, a small town two hours northwest of Detroit, where Dow has its headquarters. His laboratory is in the middle of the sprawling chemical works, a mile or two away from corporate headquarters, in a low, unassuming brick building. "We still don't understand perfectly how these polymers work," Buchholz said on a recent fall afternoon. What we do know, he said, is that superabsorbent polymers appear, on a microscopic level, to be like a tightly bundled fisherman's net. In the presence of water, that net doesn't break apart into thousands of pieces and dissolve, like sugar. Rather, it just unravels, the way a net would open up if you shook it out, and as it does the water gets stuck in the webbing. That ability to hold huge amounts of water, he said, could make superabsorbent polymers useful in fire fighting or irrigation, because slightly gelled water is more likely to stay where it's needed. There are superabsorbents mixed in with the sealant on the walls of the Chunnel between England and France, so if water leaks in the polymer will absorb the water and plug the hole.

Right now, one of the major challenges facing diaper technology, Buchholz said, is that urine is salty, and salt impairs the unravelling of the netting: superabsorbents can handle only a tenth as much salt water as fresh water. "One idea is to remove the salt from urine. Maybe you could have a purifying screen," he said. If the molecular structure of the superabsorbent were optimized, he went on, its absorptive capacity could increase by another five hundred per cent. "Superabsorbents could go from absorbing three hundred times their weight to absorbing fifteen hundred times their weight. We could have just one perfect particle of superabsorbent in a diaper. If you are going to dream, why not make the diaper as thin as a pair of underwear?"

Buchholz was in his laboratory, and he held up a small plastic cup filled with a few tablespoons of superabsorbent flakes, each not much larger than a grain of salt. "It's just a granular material, totally nontoxic," he said. "This is about two grams." He walked over to the sink and filled a large beaker with tap water, and poured the contents of the beaker into the jar of superabsorbent. At first, nothing happened. The amounts were so disproportionate that it looked as if the water would simply engulf the flakes. But, slowly and steadily, the water began to thicken. "Look," Buchholz said. "It's becoming soupy." Sure enough,

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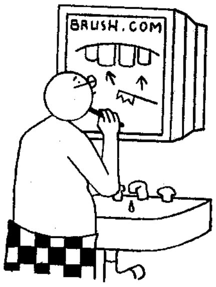
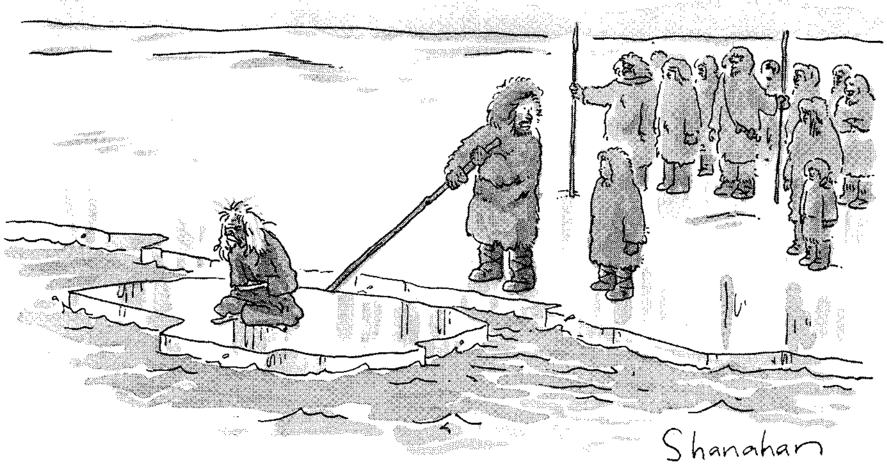
little beads of gel were forming. Nothing else was happening: there was no gas given off, no burbling or sizzling as the chemical process took place. The superabsorbent polymer was simply swallowing up the water, and within minutes the contents of the cup had thickened into what looked like slightly lumpy, spongy pudding. Buchholz picked up the jar and tilted it, to show that nothing at all was coming out. He pushed and prodded the mass with his finger. The water had disappeared. To soak up that much liquid, the Victor Mills diaper would have needed a thick bundle of paper towelling. Buchholz had used a few tablespoons of superabsorbent flakes. Superabsorbent was not merely better; it was *smaller*.

Why does it matter that the diaper got so small? It seems a trivial thing, chiefly a matter of convenience to the parent taking a bag of diapers home from the supermarket. But it turns out that size matters a great deal. There's a reason that there are now "new, improved concentrated" versions of laundry detergent, and that some cereals now come in smaller boxes. Smallness is one of those changes that send ripples through the whole economy. The old disposable diapers, for example, created a transportation problem. Tractor-trailers are prohibited by law from weighing more than eighty thousand pounds when loaded. That's why a truck carrying something heavy and compact like bottled water or Campbell's soup is "full," when the truck itself is still half empty. But the diaper of the eighties was what is known as a "high cube" item. It was bulky and not very heavy, meaning that a diaper truck was full before it reached its weight limit. By cutting the size of a diaper in half, companies could fit twice as many diapers on a truck, and cut transportation expenses in half. They could also cut the amount of warehouse space and labor they needed in half. And companies could begin to rethink their manufacturing operations. "Distribution costs used to force you to have plants in lots of places," Dudley Lehman, who heads the Kimberly-Clark diaper business, says. "As that becomes less and less of an issue, you say, 'Do I really need all my plants?' In the United States, it used to take eight. Now it takes five." (Kimberly-Clark didn't close any plants. But other manufacturers did, and here, perhaps, is a partial explanation for the great wave of corporate restructuring that swept across America in the late eighties and early nineties: firms could downsize their workforce because they had downsized their products.) And, because using five plants to make diapers is more efficient than using eight, it became possible to improve diapers without raising diaper prices—which is important, because the sheer number of diapers parents have to buy makes it a price-sensitive product. Until recently, diapers were fastened with little pieces of tape, and if the person changing the diapers got lotion or powder on her fingers the tape wouldn't work. A hook-and-loop, Velcro-like fastener doesn't have this problem. But it was years before the hook-and-loop fastener was incorporated into the diaper chassis: until over-all manufacturing costs were reduced, it was just too expensive.

Most important, though, is how size affects the way diapers are sold. The shelves along the aisles of a supermarket are divided into increments of four feet, and the space devoted to a given product category is almost always a multiple of that. Diapers, for example, might be presented as a twenty-foot set. But when diapers were at their bulkiest the space reserved for them was never enough. "You could only get a limited number on the shelf," says Sue Klug, the president of Catalina Marketing Solutions and a former executive for Albertson's and Safeway. "Say you only had six bags. Someone comes in and buys a few, and then someone else comes in and buys a few more. Now you're out of stock until someone reworks the shelf, which in some supermarkets might be a day or two." Out-of-stock rates are already a huge problem in the retail business. At any given time, only about ninety-two per cent of the products that a store is supposed to be carrying are actually on the shelf—which, if you consider that the average supermarket has thirty-five thousand items, works out to





"Remember, son, it's never too early to start saving for retirement."

• •

twenty-eight hundred products that are simply not there. (For a highly efficient retailer like Wal-Mart, in-stock rates might be as high as ninety-nine per cent; for a struggling firm, they might be in the low eighties.) But, for a fast-moving, bulky item like diapers, the problem of restocking was much worse. Supermarkets could have allocated more shelf space to diapers, of course, but diapers aren't a particularly profitable category for retailers—profit margins are about half what they are for the grocery department. So retailers would much rather give more shelf space to a growing and lucrative category like bottled water. "It's all a trade-off," Klug says. "If you expand diapers four feet, you've got to give up four feet of something else." The only way diaper-makers could insure that their products would actually be on the shelves was to make the products smaller, so they could fit twelve bags into the space of six. And if you can fit twelve bags on a shelf, you can introduce different kinds of diapers. You can add pull-ups and premium diapers and low-cost private-label diapers, all of which give parents more options.

"We cut the cost of trucking in half," says Ralph Drayer, who was in charge of logistics for Procter & Gamble for many years and now runs his own supply-chain consultancy in Cincinnati. "We cut the cost of storage in half. We cut handling in half, and we cut the cost of the store shelf in half, which is probably the most expensive space in the whole chain." Everything in the diaper world, from plant closings and trucking routes to product improvements and consumer choice and convenience, turns, in the end, on the fact that Harmon and Harper's absorbent core was smaller than Victor Mills's.

The shame of it, though, is that Harmon and Harper have never been properly celebrated for their accomplishment. Victor Mills is the famous one. When he died, he was given a *Times* obituary, in which he was called "the father of disposable diapers." When Carlyle Harmon died, seven months earlier, he got four hundred words in Utah's *Deseret News*, stressing his contributions to the Mormon Church. We tend to credit those who create an idea, not those who perfect it, forgetting that it is often only in the perfection of an idea that true progress occurs. Putting sixty-four transistors on a chip allowed people to dream of the future. Putting four million transistors on a chip actually gave them the future. The diaper is no different. The paper diaper changed parenting. But a diaper that could hold four insults without leakage, keep a baby's skin dry, clear an insult in twenty seconds flat, and would nearly always be in stock, even if you arrived at the supermarket at eight o'clock in the evening—and that would keep getting better at all those things, year in and year out—was another thing altogether. This was more than a good idea. This was something like perfection. ♦

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THE SPORTING SCENE

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?

The Yankees lost, but the baseball lit up New York.

BY ROGER ANGELL

Come back, Shane Spencer. Baseball, taking its late leave after an astounding run of post-season games and a World Series captured by the Arizona Diamondbacks in the last inning of the seventh and final game, is missed now like the passing of Christmas or a kid's hero in fadeout over the hill. Gone are the games and, this time, the telling of the games, as well. For a week or more while the Series was going on, friends encountered on the street here in New York or urgently heard from by telephone or E-mail began with "Wasn't that—" or "Could you believe it when—" and they'd tell you where they were when Tino Martinez tied up Game Four with his two-run homer, with two out in the ninth, or how they were still watching but had actually—can you believe it!—gone to bed and were almost asleep when Scott Brosius did exactly the same thing the next night: hit a two-out, two-run, game-tying shot off the same Diamondbacks closer. Then we were ready to jump back to Game Four again and Derek Jeter's tenth-inning mini-dinger, just into the right-field stands, which came in an at-bat that began just before midnight on October 31st, and won the thing four minutes later, in November. And did you catch that TV shot of the guy in the stands, in the middle of all that screaming and jumping, holding up a sign that said "Mr. November"? Wasn't that something? Can you believe it?

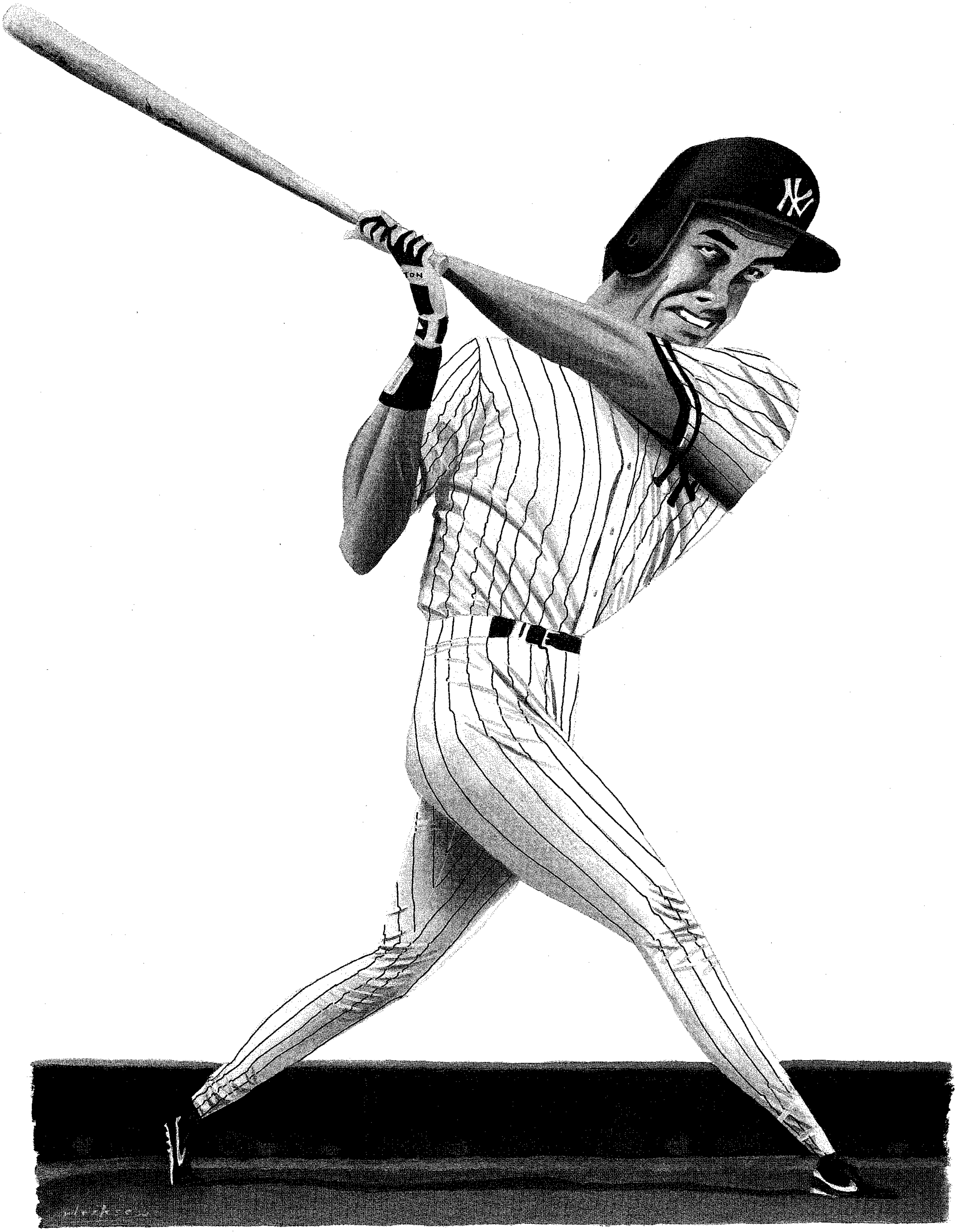
Baseball as melodrama, with the winning or tying runs arriving in sudden reversal in the bottom of the ninth inning, is the way children or non-fans expect the games to go, but when it happened three times in this World Series, including the finale, it was the hardened fans and the players and coaches, and even the writers, who were dumbfounded, exchanging excited glances and shaking their heads after the latest stroke of the unlikely. Reggie Jackson, murmuring mostly to himself late in the Yankee clubhouse after Game Five, said, "I don't understand it. It's unbelievable. I'm amazed." Winners' disbelief became endemic in the Series, at first afflicting the suave defending-champion Yankees, after they had swept their three games at the Stadium in adventure-comix fashion, and then the upstart Diamondbacks, at their resortlike Bank One Ballpark, in Phoenix, when they turned around Game Seven in its final instants. Their pair of runs against Mariano Rivera, the best closer in history, produced a 3–2 win and snatched away a fourth successive World Championship from the sovereign Yankees.

This part of the story, still being told in exclamatory fashion by Arizona friends meeting at the mall or pool or corral, is the one that matters, of course. Trailing by 2–1, at the end of an improbable string of innings that had matched up two twenty-game winners—Roger Clemens and the D'Backs' ace or co-ace, Curt Schilling—and facing the imminent arrival of a Yankee hug-up on the field and another autumn-sunlight parade up Broadway, the newcomers pieced together three hits and a pair of bunts to topple the fabled and nearly untouchable Mariano. Yankee defense and Yankee pitching, the pillars of their recent empire, both failed in plain sight here, brought down by the Diamondbacks' courage and opportunism. A leadoff Arizona single by the thirty-seven-year-old classicist Mark Grace, and the expected sacrifice bunt from Damian Miller, which was thrown wild past second base by Rivera, brought the first pausing "Uh-oh"s up and down the Eastern time zone. Another bunt became a force-out at third, but the tying run was delivered on a broken-bat double stroked to right by shortstop Tony Womack. A different Rivera pitch, which barely brushed the hand of the new batter, Craig Counsell, may have been the killing mistake, in retrospect. With the bases loaded now and only one out, the infield chose to play in, and the championship poke—a softly looped single by Luis Gonzalez onto the grass in short left-center, catchable by Jeter in the other configuration—brought Jay Bell flying in from third and sent the pompom-waving multitudes into frenzies of happiness. Home players, boiling out of the dugout, threw themselves into pigpiles around the infield, with the Yankees, for once, looking on in wintry silence.

A word must be said here for Fox Sports' Tim McCarver, the stay-at-homes' seatmate at these big games, who looked at the left-hitting Gonzalez as he stood in against Rivera in this last at-bat of the year and expressed concern about Mariano's habit of pitching inside. "Left-handers get a lot of broken-bat hits into the shallow part of the outfield," he observed. "That's the danger of bringing the infield in with a guy like Rivera on the mound." No sooner said: Gonzalez, on his second swing, broke his bat and delivered the flare.

Arizona fans are a little short on baseball lore—the franchise is four years old, and their World Championship is the quickest to arrive for any expansion team—but they did a lot of catching up in this game. The principals—the Yankee starter Roger Clemens; the averted-gaze, sleekly firing Rivera; the blond and long-chested Curt Schilling; and the six-foot-ten Randy Johnson, back in action as a late reliever and ultimate winner (he took three games in the Series, all told) a day after his smothering seven innings and hundred and one pitches in Game Six—had been in the news and on our minds throughout these games. Their presence, together here in the last act, gave them a mythic substantiality; they

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARK ULRIKSEN



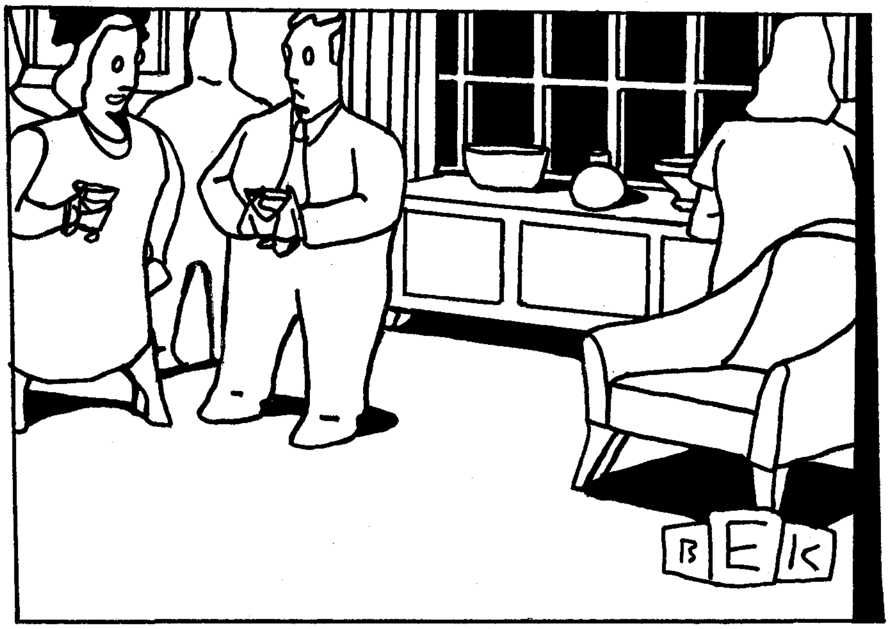
For Paul O'Neill, who is retiring at the age of thirty-eight, every Yankee game and at-bat was a clenched-teeth psychodrama.

were like those gigantic Bread and Puppet Theatre heads you saw bobbing along in protest parades in the sixties.

Clemens, sweating ferociously in the eighty-seven-degree heat, with his minuscule, bunched-together features squinched into a knot of concentration, stared down every difficulty (he had men on base in every inning), struck out ten, and turned over a six-and-a-third-inning 1–1 tie on his departure. He had already delivered the dodgy, essential third game, back at Yankee Stadium, with a 2–1 outing, pitched despite a strained and sore right hamstring, which brought the Yanks back from their early two-game deficit, and he looked like the hero here, and a strong choice as Most Valuable Player. The ancient knock on Clemens has been that he doesn't do well in big games, but the canard should now expire. As manager Joe Torre put it, "I don't think he will have to defend himself again."

Schilling (at 22–6 this year for the Diamondbacks) and Clemens (with his 20–3) were the first twenty-game winners to face off in a final Series game since 1985. Schilling's arrival in Arizona, in July of last year, after a massive trade with the Phillies, was a grand coup for the free-spending owner, Jerry Colangelo, a Phoenix developer, who had arrived in baseball on his own terms—"kicked in the door," as Schilling put it—and was determined to deliver a championship without the customary period of hangdog smiling and losing that most new owners endure. Randy Johnson, the left-handed Ionic column, had arrived as a free agent two seasons before, signing on for $52.4 million over four years. He and Schilling simply panzered the National League this summer, accounting for forty-seven per cent of the team's wins, and winning nine of the pair's eleven starts in the playoffs. Johnson, who is thirty-eight, struck out three hundred and seventy-two batters in the course of his 21–6 summer, and has just picked up a third successive Cy Young Award; his opposite number is Clemens, who took the honor for the sixth time.

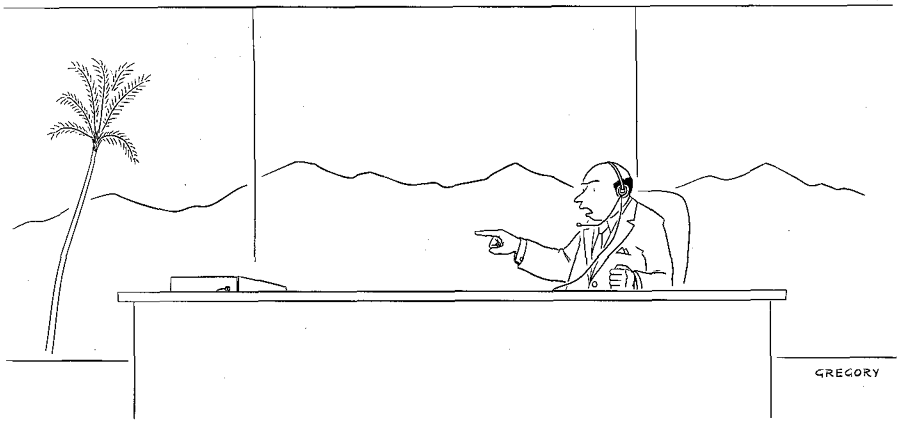
Schilling, with that dominating jaw and rock-star pack of hair, is attractive and smart and—well, we can no longer say "overassured," can we? Asked by a reporter about the "mystique and aura" of the Yankees, he said they sounded like a pair of strippers to him. Back in September, he wrote a moving, widely distributed essay about America after the Trade Center attack. I retain a vivid picture of the complete-game 2–0 shutout that Schilling delivered for the Phillies against Toronto in the 1993 World Series, when he pitched on pure character in the late going, and between-times lay back on the bench like an expiring emir, his head hidden beneath a towel. He came into this Series announcing his availability as the starter for the first, fourth, and seventh games, and the efforts of his manager, Bob Brenly, to bring this about encouraged a rush of double-thinking and position-taking by the media. Benefitted by a 9–1 Arizona waltz in the opener, Schilling did return on three days' rest for Game Four. Ahead by 3–1, in a strong performance, he was taken out after seven innings: a defensible logic, perhaps, right up to the moment when the Arizona closer Byung-Hyun Kim suffered that sudden incandescence at the hands of Tino Martinez. Brenly, staring down a roomful of second-guessers, admitted in a postgame interview that one of his reasons for the removal had been to save Schilling for a start in Game Seven, when and if.



"Where do you come up with your rationalizations for not writing?"

This did come to pass, as we know, but now the beleaguered skipper faced a trip on his knees to the top of one of the nearby peaks (a favorite Apache way of saying "I'm sorry") for permitting Curt to bat for himself in the seventh inning in the tied-up, 1–1 final—and to cough up Alfonso Soriano's eighth-inning go-ahead homer. Brenly's last move of the year was Randy Johnson, whom he had kept in action in Game Six, the previous evening, for all those pitches, despite a 15–2 home-team lead. Dead wrong, said the writers to each other, except that the reappearing Randy—a spectre and a half to the Yankees' left-handed batters by now—delivered four outs, and turned the proceedings over to his teammates in the ninth, who won it. No wonder managers hug everybody when the champagne begins to flow. What Brenly knew, of course, was that Johnson, a hard nut, had pulled off the same feat while pitching for the Seattle Mariners in the American League divisional championships of 1995, when he came back on one day's rest after capturing the third game and stubbornly tacked on three more innings for the win that eliminated the Yankees, of all people. Since then, the Yankees had emerged as winners in fourteen post-season series, including the last eleven in a row (a stretch of seventy-two games, all told) before they ran into Randy again in a significant game—but he had become a bad habit for them after all.

The Diamondbacks showed confidence and fortitude in this Series (and some terrific plays around second base), and their deserved trophy, the first for any professional team in the Valley of the Sun, is being carried about to banquets and football games there, where it's touched and rubbed like a holy relic. Mark Grace and Matt Williams, the venerated infield corners, may feel the same way about their Series rings, when they arrive: the first for either one after their combined twenty-nine seasons in the show.



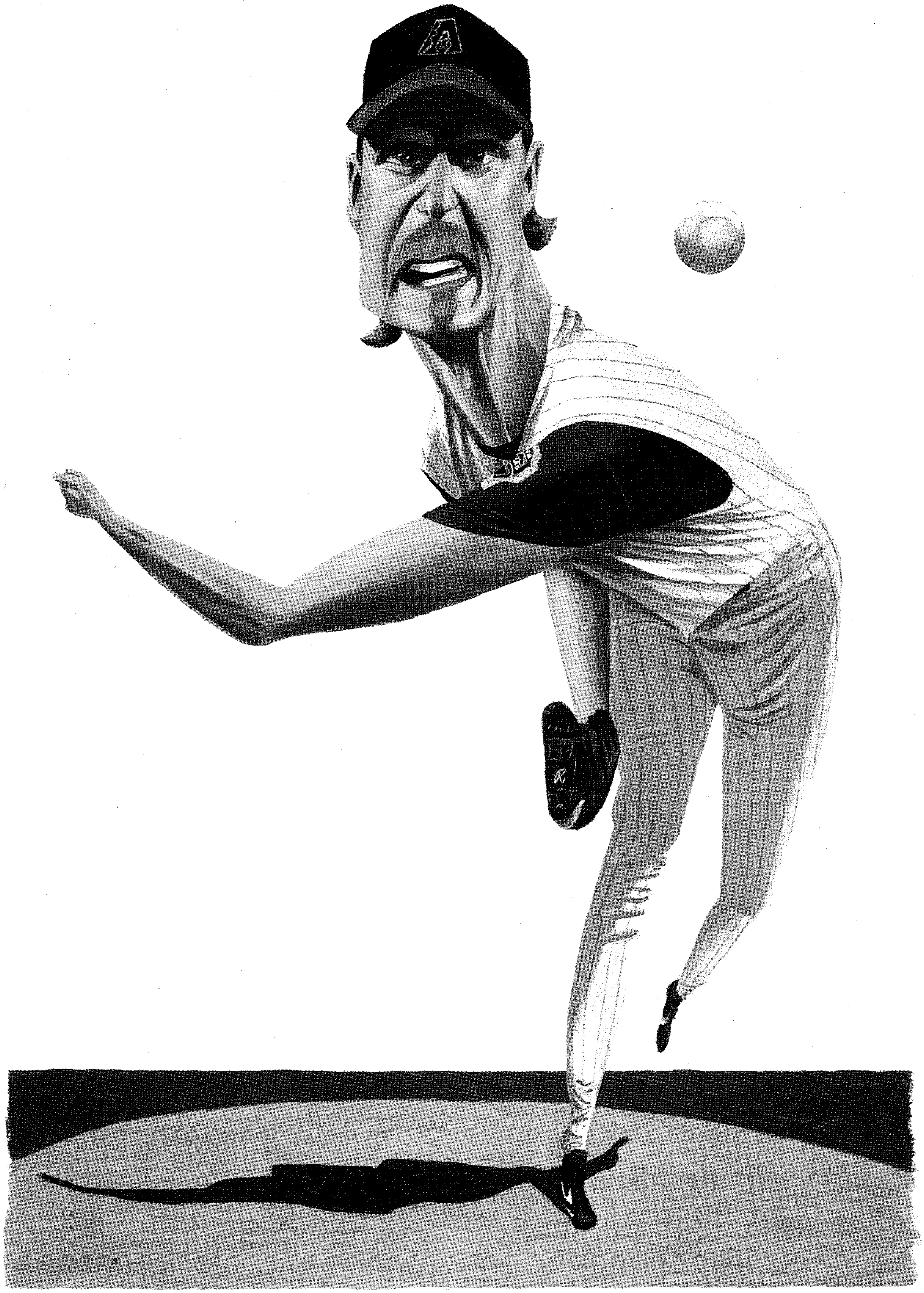
"I don't want to hear 'can't'—you find out where the Special Forces are deployed, and you send them some goddam muffin baskets!"

In a less shadowed baseball autumn, there might be more time to think about a flurry of feats and farewells that turned up before the close of regular play. The celebrations of Cal Ripken Day in Baltimore were fervent. The pale-eyed god, retiring after twenty-one seasons, which had included that 2,632-consecutive-games wonder, 3,184 lifetime base hits, and nineteen consecutive All-Star Game appearances, waved to the fans from a slowly circling convertible, out beyond where Camden Yards groundskeepers had mowed his No. 8 into the outfield grass. There were gifts and tears and "whereas"es. When the Orioles ran out onto the field to begin the game against the Red Sox, first baseman Jeff Conine tossed the infield warmup ball toward Ripken, as usual, but this time threw it over by the stands—so that Cal had to run it down in foul territory. When he turned around, there was no sign of his teammates. A different batch of Orioles—the lineup from August 12, 1981, his very first start in the majors—had appeared from the third-base dugout: Rick Dempsey behind the plate, Eddie Murray at first, Rich Dauer at second, and Gary Roenicke, Al Bumbry, and Ken Singleton heading toward their positions around the outfield. There were empty places at shortstop, where the late Mark Belanger had held forth, and at third, where Ripken played back then. The middle-aged O's were in their ancient uniforms, and wore caps displaying that long-gone grinning-bird logo. And here came Earl Weaver, tiny and snowy-haired, walking up to the home-plate ump with his lineup card. Sensation.

In San Diego, Tony Gwynn, the perennial Padre batting champion, hung them up after twenty seasons and a lifetime .338. In San Francisco, the Giants' Barry Bonds, largely underappreciated as the best player of his time, took care of the slur with his seventy-three home runs, eclipsing Mark McGwire's once epochal seventy. (McGwire has just retired, unexpectedly departing at the age of thirty-eight because of chronic knee problems.) Bonds's season-long assault on the McGwire mark was almost quietly waged, because he was so clearly and admirably engrossed in trying to help his team win, which used to be the main idea. Almost more impressive to his fellow-pros was Barry's .863 slugging average (total bases per at-bat) this year, which is tops in the books, ever.

Attention must be paid also to Rickey Henderson, whose final hit of the year for the Padres put him into the three-thousand-lifetime-hits coterie. Henderson, of course, is the forever stolen-base champ: his 1,395 swipes puts him four hundred and fifty-seven ahead of the nearest pursuer, Lou Brock. This year, Rickey also went past Ty Cobb for most lifetime runs scored and Babe Ruth for most walks, but I prefer his all-time seventy-nine lead-off home runs, because each of them, if you think about it, so depressed and pissed off some pitcher. In his prime, with the vivid Oakland teams of the eighties, Henderson leading off first base was a twitchy, squinting packet of energy—you laughed at the sight—that drove the pitcher and the infielders to distraction. He became such a threat to the outcome of close games that more than one manager made the decision to walk the batter just ahead of him (with the bases empty, I mean) in order to clog his progress. Irritation became Henderson's life work, afflicting even his teammates along the way. After Rickey won a protracted argument with the Oakland management over the payment of a million-dollar bonus clause in his contract in 1989, Athletics general manager Sandy Alderson heard that the transaction didn't seem to have cleared a bank. Rickey, legend has it, had framed the check instead of cashing it, and had it up on a wall at home.

Baseball's story this year will always turn back to Yankee Stadium, where the games for a time felt diminished and trivial after the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center. Ceremonials and long minutes of silence, players in Fire and Police Department caps (and the "PAPD" version, for the Port Authority's cops), plus attending groups of policemen and firemen, vociferously cheered, greeted the resumption of play after a week's suspension, but the altered thoughts and fractured attention that each of us now bore didn't allow much fun to come through. When the Yanks dropped the first two games of the divisional playoffs to the headlong young Oakland A's, at the Stadium, I bade goodbye to them and their eminent departing seniors in my heart, perhaps almost with relief that I wouldn't soon again be hearing "God Bless America" in these emotional settings. (How many other New Yorkers there, I'd asked myself, could remember breakfast times in the late sixties, an epoch away, when Larry Josephson, a host with the left-leaning radio station WBAI, would do



A for effort for Arizona ace Randy Johnson, along with a World Series co-M.V.P. award and his third successive Cy Young.

a little fund-raising by playing Kate Smith's "God Bless America" over and over again, non-stop, until his listeners had phoned in fifty bucks' worth of pledges, in self-defense?)

And then, with the Yankees away in Oakland for the weekend games, pessimism took a sudden kick in the pants from Derek Jeter and his play up the first-base line in Game Three. With the Yanks clinging to a parlous 1–0 lead in the seventh (these series are three losses and out) and an Athletics base runner, Jeremy Giambi, leading off first, Terrence Long drove a smash into the right-field corner, where the ball was grabbed and flung plateward by Shane Spencer. His throw airmailed both cutoff men, Soriano and Martinez, and was skipping aimlessly along when Jeter arrived from the middle of the diamond, snatched up the ball backhand, and in the same motion flipped it sidewise to catcher Jorge Posada, who tagged the flying Giambi on the back of his right leg a fraction before his foot touched the plate. The feat takes longer in the telling than the playing, but what was clear on the instant was that Giambi was out, that the Yankees would win, and that nobody at Network Associates Coliseum or anyplace else had ever seen this done before. Electrifying and liberating, the play blew loose a gust of change and baseball happiness back in New York. Anything was possible now, even a couple of seconds of pure good news.

The play has been memorized everywhere. When you rerun the footage, Jeter's presence on the right side of the diamond still startles, but Derek is at ease in this strange place. With his body bent double for the backhand grab, he starts the play running full tilt into foul ground, thirty feet from home, and finishes it like a tricky touch-football lateral. (One friend of mine saw a bucket-brigade shift and lean to Jeter's hand-along.) The flip, in any case, perfectly leads Posada, putting the ball into his mitt with his arms extended, at a juncture where he can complete the sweep and tag in the same motion. If the throw arrives a few inches closer to his body, the play becomes a catch and a lunge, and the runner is already past him. Giambi should have slid—he would have been safe if he had—but he didn't.

The play unsettled or even undid the Athletics, who did not distinguish themselves in their swiftly following run of losses: a 9–2 beating the next day (in which their cleanup batter, Jermaine Dye, weirdly suffered a broken left tibia with his own tipped foul); and, back at Yankee Stadium again the very next day, their error-strewn 5–3 elimination. Jeter delivered two hits in this game, and fell on his back into a front-row box beyond third base in the eighth while completing an outlandish catch. The bleacher fans had not been on hand in Oakland, but now they gave him their all—the full "Der-ek JEET-AH!" over and over. With the next stage for the Yanks assured, the first sense of a different text or script for New York was in the air.

Jeter keeps rearriving. He is twenty-seven, with six full seasons and one base hit short of twelve hundred to his credit—the most for anyone in baseball since 1996. Casting back to decide which of his rivals among the great current generation of shortstops might also have been capable of the relay play out in Oakland, I come up with the Indians' Omar Vizquel, but I don't think he would have imagined it.

Joe Torre said, "This kid, with that play the other day, thinks cool in hot situations. And making that play, he never has any regard for putting his body in peril or being embarrassed with a bad swing. We have a number of them, but he's a true leader at a very early age."

The Seattle Mariners, who will have but a cameo role in this account, tied a record with their hundred and sixteen wins this summer but contrived to turn up at the Stadium two down in the American League Championship Series, after strong performances by Andy Pettitte, Mike Mussina, and Rivera out at Safeco Field. The clubs now exchanged lopsided wins in the third and fifth games, the last a 12–3 elimination party by the Yankees. What deserves remembrance is the middle, fourth game, an austere classic that has been dimmed a bit by the World Series. The gimpy Clemens and his successor, Ramiro Mendoza, had between them given up only a lone single when Bret Boone delivered a homer with two out in the eighth, for the first run of the game. This was the evening when the Yankees' extreme debility at the plate—which was to finish them off in the end—fully showed itself, as they found themselves unable to bring home any of the eight batters walked by the Mariners' Paul Abbott. But heigh-ho, no matter: here came Bernie Williams, with his one-out, full-count homer against Arthur Rhodes, to tie things up again in the eighth, and then Alfonso Soriano, the rookie second baseman, to win it with a two-run walk-off job in the ninth. Magical.

Bronx fans had a party the next night, when their guys blew out the visitors, with some old Yankee icons—Paul O'Neill, Bernie Williams, and Tino Martinez—each contributing a home run. The Mariners' celebrity star Ichiro Suzuki was a bust in these games, repeatedly driven off the plate by inside pitching, and the Seattle express, gone now without much of a struggle, would not threaten the famous hundred and twenty-five total wins (regular-season plus post-season victories) rung up by these same Yankees in 1998. "Hey-hey-hey, goodbye!" sang the top-deck fans, to the old "Sha-na-na" strains, while the lower stands, for no reason, fell to chanting "Hip hip Jor-hay! Hip hip Jor-hay!" during a Posada at-bat, throwing their arms up like cheerleaders. With the World Series gained once again and an extra week or more of New York baseball guaranteed, the bleacherites stayed on after the game ended, pointing and cheering when Joe Torre went over to Rudy Giuliani's box, next to the home dugout, and escorted the Mayor—a devout Yankee fan, a guy who stays on until the end of the game—onto the field with the other heroes.

Seattle manager Lou Piniella, a classy gent, told the writers how he'd looked around at the yowling and stomping fans as they disported themselves after the Yankees' horrid bat-around sixth, even taunting his club with "Overrated! Overrated!" and almost wanted to cheer a little, too. "I thought, Boy, this city has suffered a lot, and tonight they let out a lot of emotions," he said. "I felt good for them, I really did—and that's a strange thought to come from a manager who's getting his ass kicked."

What Piniella felt about New York was shared, I believe, by fans and casual baseball watchers everywhere this fall, and perhaps even by some who have but a passing awareness of baseball. The

Yankees are famous symbols for the city, of course, but only in a Steinbrennerian, overdog sort of way. This particular Yankee team, however, is very well known, thanks to its continuity of players—the center core of Paul O'Neill, Tino Martinez, Scott Brosius, Derek Jeter, Bernie Williams, Chuck Knoblauch, Andy Pettitte, and Mariano Rivera, who go back nearly half a decade together—and to their hundreds of accumulated hours on national television. Their smallest mannerisms are familiar to countless Americans, who this year may have been seeing them, even without knowing it, as home folks—the only New York family on their radar. The Yankee players had been on the scene, so to speak, on the morning of September 11th, when the bad news for the country arrived, and how they felt and how they would fare now mattered. And millions here in the city felt the connection: the Yanks were us.

President Bush threw the ceremonial first pitch of Game Three for a strike, from the full distance, and the Yankees and the weather seemed to take it from there. Arizona's veteran-loaded assemblage had been assuring themselves that the clamor and history of the old ballpark wouldn't bother them, but the chilly, swirling Bronx breezes felt unfair. Foul balls sailed sidewise out of reach, back by the screen, while Diamondback infielders bumped into each other on routine pops, and their discomfited pitchers let fly with three wild pitches. *Our* wind, the fans felt, pumping their fists into it. Clemens, defending a 1–1 score, pitched on undistracted, and Yankee defense produced a diving grab by Soriano in the sixth that saved a run, and, just afterward, a skidding backhand catch by Spencer in left field, as he collared Matt Williams's rocket. The Yankees' go-ahead run in the bottom half, delivered by Brosius, was hailed by cowbells and flying bits of paper, and soon came Rivera to nail things down. Almost a great game.

It was Halloween the next night, when Game Four produced the first of Byung-Hyun Kim's bitter disappointments. Spencer this time threw a runner out at home, on a super play, but the indomitable Arizonas were ahead, by 3–1, in the ninth when Tino Martinez, with Paul O'Neill on base after a single, hit Kim's first offering over the wall in center. Kim is a submariner, but Tino had gone into the clubhouse video room here to study his slants against the earlier batters. He looked for a rising fastball on the first pitch, and jumped on it. Derek Jeter, by contrast, took an outside Kim offering into the short-right-field seats for that winning blow in the tenth, and flew into home plate like a descending parachutist.

The "Wow"s and "No way"s echoing down the Stadium ramps and around the clubhouse as well were so loud that it was a while before I remembered that Orlando Hernández, who had started the game and pitched eloquently in his six and a third innings, had held out a philosopher's promise of an ending like this. Talking via an interpreter on Tuesday afternoon, a day before his start, he declined to discuss his previous autumn triumphs and adventures with the Yankees. "It doesn't really do anything," El Duque said, "but on Thursday, God willing"—Thursday had just arrived—"we'll be able to speak about tomorrow's game."

Diamondback rooters will have to make do with a tinged and perhaps parochial closing view of these proceedings, which now takes us aboard the No. 4 Lexington Avenue Express one last time, headed uptown for Game Five. Late autumn and the imminent end of baseball bring a particular blackness and sense of foreboding to the Stadium, with its dark backgrounds and blue facings. The fans are bundled in their winter gear, and the serried rows of faces have a mushroomy hue. Not much optimism had carried over from the midnight events that tied up the Series, and the Diamondbacks' fresh 2–0 advantage—two solo home runs in their fifth, against Mussina—felt insurmountable. The Yankee batters couldn't do much against Miguel Batista, a determined journeyman righty, and the fans fell into souvenir bouts of cries and applause for Paul O'Neill, who was retiring when the Series ended, and for Martinez and Brosius and Knoblauch and perhaps even El Duque, who might not be back again, either. When the ninth arrived, I said goodbye to colleagues in the auxiliary press box (I wasn't going to Phoenix) and moved a few yards along to the main box, where I could stand behind the back

THE CHOICE

Once in northern England I got a few pub drunks
to drive to Wordsworth's house, local thugs
whose underheated VW (orange) took me
fishtailing down icy hills,

through hedgerows in an unlit labyrinth
reminiscent of the library stacks I wandered around
zombielike each day, not composing
verses but waiting in scarlet lipstick

for the bars to open. I'd left my homeland
fleeing a man I'd faked first caring, then
not caring about, and in months of Euclidean solitude
I'd writ no cogent phrase. The notebook in my knapsack

was a talisman I carried into train stations so as not
to look like a bimbo. But bimbo
I was, and open, the bound pages were only white wings
to nap on. Near dawn, our caravan came

to a sleet-glazed window—a child's stumpy desk
with the poet's initials penknifed on top.
It was my first stab of reverence,
when that hunger to emblazon

some surface with oneself became barbarous
wonder at someone else. WW—
jagged as inverted Alps, unscalable
as a cathedral's gold-leaf dome.

After that, grad school was a must.
There I posed as supplicant till enough
magnificence had been poured
down my throat that I could whiff

the difference between it and the stench
I spilled. When I told the resident genius
that given the choice between writing and being
happy, I'd pick the latter, she touched my folio

with her pencil like a bad fairy's wand,
saying, *Don't worry, you don't have that choice.*
And in a blink of my un-mascara'ed eye
the intricate world bloomed into being—impossible

to transcribe on the small bare page.

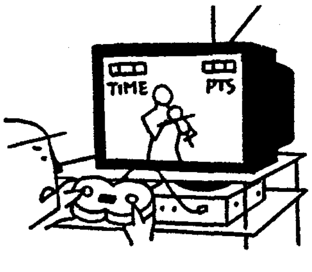
—*Mary Karr*

row and then make a quick jump along to the elevators and the clubhouses when the last out arrived. I was still there when Brosius, coming up to bat against the selfsame Kim (what was he doing here, anyway?) with two outs and Posada on second, swung his bat and insistently threw both hands into the air. Jumping a little myself, I saw more than a hundred writers and columnists look up from their computer screens and game stories, and then down again as they unanimously and professionally punched in "Del" or "Cancel" or "Shit." We were tied again, lightning had struck twice, and Kim, who had cringed down to his knees as the Brosius shot went out, was being comforted by his infielders, with Mark Grace hugging him like a dad.

The mini-game that now transpired required an extra graf or two from the writers for Soriano's horizontal dive and catch, with the bases loaded in the eleventh, when he snaffled Reggie Sanders's low drive in the webbing of his mitt to save a couple of runs. But Brenly was down to the bottom of his bullpen, and Soriano's single to right in the twelfth brought in Knoblauch, with the winning run and the amazing three-night sweep.

"It's 'Groundhog Day,'" Joe Torre said. "I don't know what's going on."

This replica last-gasp Yankee win and their brief but doomed lead in the Series weren't the only things to take home at the end. From the eighth inning on, the bleacher fans and then the entire right side of the Stadium delivered an extended homage to their dour and departing neighbor, Paul O'Neill. Nothing started this, not a catch or a play—they'd saved up for the moment. "Paulie!" came the deep chant. "Paulie!" It went on for long minutes, with a spontaneous "clap-clap, clapclapclap" echo thrown in after each proclamation, and the name coming in booming, incised block letters now: "PAUL OH NEILL!"... "PAUL OH NEILL!"



He looked up at the fans from the field, twisting his head to one side as if to acknowledge what was going on but without throwing out anything as blatant as a wave. When the half-inning ended, he tipped his cap from in front of the dugout. "I'm thinking, What's the right thing to do here?" he said later. "We were still losing the game."

I've written often and at length about O'Neill's line drives and flung helmets and scarifying at-bats—scarifying to him, of course—and it sometimes startled me that people I knew continued to misread him, and to find his self-absorption annoying or egocentric. But those grimacing scowls, I always felt, came from a sense of rigor and duty he had imposed upon himself. Shy and driven, and privately religious, he believed he'd been given a tremendous gift, which he had to repay with each game and inning and at-bat. His teammates and his family sometimes tried to kid him about the doom and gloom, but he never let himself up. One of his four brothers, Robert, called his sister Molly (the oldest sibling) last summer in the middle of a 1-for-17 drought of Paul's, and said, "I just heard from Happy—calling from the George Washington Bridge. He said the jump was looking better and better." In his flagellating desire, O'Neill reminded me of Carl Yastrzemski, who never gave himself a day off, either. Yaz had more talent than Paul and could carry his Red Sox team for days on end, but for me and those folks around right field O'Neill summed up this particular Yankee club, which made such a serious business out of winning, and did it for so long.

Standing in front of his locker when the game was over—and for once looking younger than his years—O'Neill said, "We've done all we can possibly do in this Stadium. We left it all on the field."

I'm not sure whether another bunch of players will come along whom we can follow with the unstinting interest and affection that we gave to this élite group, or even whether baseball, when spring comes back, will seem worth caring about again. I doubt that it will offer the balm that these Yankee games did, but, as Fats Waller used to say, "One never knows, do one?" ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

VIRTUAL LOVE

People became obsessed with a boy's tale of suffering and redemption. Then they wanted to meet him.

BY TAD FRIEND

One night in the spring of 1993, the writer Armistead Maupin received an urgent phone call from a woman named Vicki Johnson. She sounded despondent. For months, Maupin, the author of the popular "Tales of the City" novels, had been talking on the phone with Vicki's adopted son, Anthony Godby Johnson, several times a week, and had come to consider Tony a very close friend. He was funny, kind, sensitive, and smart. Although he was only fifteen, he had just written a harrowing memoir about being abused, both physically and sexually, by his parents and their friends, and then being rescued by his new Mom, Vicki, a social worker in Union City, New Jersey. Maupin had read the galleys of the book, "A Rock and a Hard Place," and had been deeply moved by it. He wrote a blurb for the book jacket, and got in touch with the young author, knowing that they didn't have much time to become acquainted: Tony revealed in the book that he had contracted AIDS as a result of his abuse, and his health was deteriorating rapidly.

I visited Maupin recently at his home, in San Francisco. He told me that when Vicki Johnson called that evening she had said that Tony might not live through the night and was curled up in a ball, asking for Armistead. "I waited with tremendous anxiety as she passed the phone to him," Maupin said. "Tony's voice was small, and he was breathing with great difficulty. I thought, My God, this child is going to die while I'm talking to him. We started talking about death, and I told him about my mother's funeral, the most horrible day of my life, and how I looked up and saw that one of the gravediggers had a T-shirt on that said 'Virginia Is for Lovers.' Tony laughed, and afterward he often referred to that moment. I told Tony, finally, that I loved him. He said it really helped him, and I felt heroic. I went to sleep feeling that I alone, my voice, had made that kind of difference in a child's life."

The first thing I'd noticed in Maupin's house was a framed photograph of Tony in the living room. A handsome boy with brown hair, blue eyes, and a wide, wary smile, he held a pencil in his hand as if caught in the act of writing. That photograph is in many other homes across the country and around the world, for Tony Johnson has an extraordinary ability to connect with people and become an important figure in their lives. Over the past ten years, his chance friendship has made people fly thousands of miles to see him, made them reëvaluate choices they've made, and even made them abandon their careers to take care of him. No one whose life he has touched has been left unaffected, and through letters and phone calls Tony has befriended a wide array of people, including the late Paul Monette, the National Book Award-winning writer; Fred Rogers, the host of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood"; Mickey Mantle; the former Mr. Universe Bob Paris; Tom Robbins, the author of "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues"; Jermaine Jackson, of the singing Jackson family; the former ESPN anchor Keith Olbermann; and a New Jersey priest and an Israeli rabbi, blacks and whites, gays and straights, ex-nuns and lonely old men.

"A Rock and a Hard Place," which was published in 1993, is now in its fifth paperback printing. It still inspires fans to leave impassioned messages on Tony's Web site, and twenty-three of twenty-eight reader reviews on Amazon.com give the book five stars. Tony has become a symbol of modern victimhood, his body torn apart by the most appalling end-of-the-millennium traumas—child abuse and AIDS. Their depredations eventually robbed Tony of his left leg, his spleen, a testicle, and the sight in one eye. Yet, even as he became bedridden from recurrent pneumonia, his character sparkled. "I'm going to start smoking to even out the cough," he'd say lightly to friends. At times angry, at times bewildered, Tony always brimmed with the passionate moral authority of doomed youth. Pay attention to those in pain, Tony said. Listen to those who are different. Hug those you love. To the faithful friends who continue to communicate with him, Tony is nothing less than a magical boy.

Armistead Maupin, who is fifty-seven and has blue eyes and a gray mustache, exudes good will and a sense of mischief. But, as he discussed how he began to have doubts about Tony and his story, he looked miserable. I had the sense that there had been a rupture in his life that was tantamount to a loss of faith. As the months and years passed, Maupin explained, he couldn't help wondering how Tony kept on living, even as he kept on almost dying. He didn't understand why Tony would never allow his friends to meet him. He couldn't help wondering—and hating himself for the thought—whether Tony wasn't too good to be true.

The first public record of Tony Johnson is a beguiling letter he wrote, in August, 1991, to Paul Monette, the author and gay activist, who himself had AIDS. In the letter, which is among Monette's papers at U.C.L.A., the thirteen-year-old Tony, who was then calling himself Anthony Robert Johnson, said that he was very sick, too, and that in the hospital he had bartered four sports magazines for Monette's books "Love Alone" and "Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir." In a looping cursive that filled the wide-ruled lines of his notebook paper, Tony wrote, "I just wanted to say, Mr. Monette, that I'm glad I traded with that guy in the hospital to get your books. . . . I hope you're doing good. I also *love* the way you write. I sat with the dictionary to read your book but I learned *lots* of new words." He included a photo and signed off, "Your friend, Tony."

Monette's companion, Winston Wilde, was there when Monette received Tony's letter. "Paul wasn't going to reply, because he thought the letter was a

The first public record of Tony Johnson is a letter he wrote in 1991 to Paul Monette, the author, who, like Tony, had AIDS.

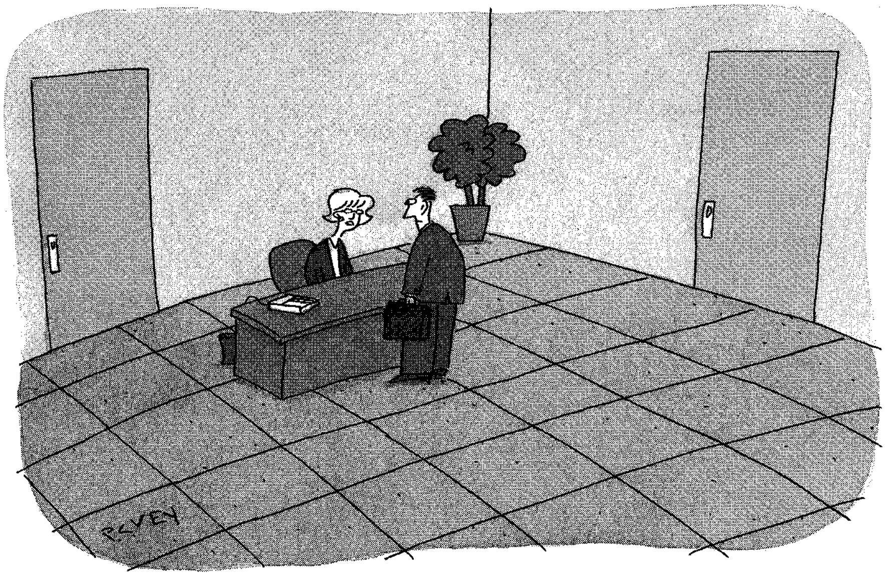
GERALD SLOTA, "UNTITLED (BIG PINHEAD)" (1998)/RICCO/MARESCA GALLERY

little strange," Wilde told me recently. "I said, 'How can you not answer this kid? He's dying!' So Paul wrote back." Wilde, a psychotherapist in Beverly Hills, said, "That's a real regret in my life. Before I knew it, Paul and Tony were talking on the phone every night for hours."

Monette later wrote that because Tony was dying, and because he was "so disarming, so ebullient, loved to laugh so much," he instantly became one of the three or four people who "could really understand what I was on the brink of." The more Monette heard of Tony's story, the more convinced he became that Tony should write it down. He referred the boy to his agent, Wendy Weil, who also represents Alice Walker and Rita Mae Brown, and to his editor at Crown, David Groff. When Tony hit an impasse writing "A Rock and a Hard Place" and worried that no one wanted to hear an obscure boy's tale of woe, Monette urged him to remember that "the greatest human testament we have from the Second World War was written by a fourteen-year-old girl."

Born in Manhattan in 1977, Tony was a precocious boy whose dream was to be a power-hitting shortstop for the New York Yankees. At the age of seven, he asked his mother to buy him the soundtrack to "The Muppet Movie," which contained his favorite song, "Rainbow Connection." She agreed, Tony wrote in his book, if he would spend a few minutes with her friend Jake. When Tony was brought to meet Jake, the man raped him. This kind of treatment was not unusual in Tony's household. His father, a New York City cop, and his parents' sadistic friends abused Tony regularly and pandered him to a ring of pedophiles. They gave him no bed to lie on, no winter coat, not even a toothbrush. When he was five, Tony wrote, Santa left him a note "stating that he would not be leaving anything for me because I had been a bad boy. I was relieved to find out shortly afterward that there was no such thing as Santa Claus anyway. He was just made up, like all of those other stupid stories we were told."

After a particularly brutal beating one morning when he was eleven, Tony decided to kill himself by jumping in front of a subway train. Before he left the apartment, though, he called a national hot line and spoke to a black man from



"Which door did you come through?"

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the South who urged him to call a child-welfare service in Manhattan. He called the service and spoke with a woman named Vicki, who made arrangements to take him to a hospital. Doctors discovered that fifty-four of his bones had been broken and had knit badly; he also had an advanced case of syphilis. During Tony's recovery, the black man from the South, whose name was Earnist Johnson, came north to visit him. Miraculously, Ernie fell in love with Vicki, who had stayed at Tony's hospital bedside. The police jailed Tony's mother and father, and the judge was so incensed by their behavior that he excused Tony from testifying and sentenced his parents to twenty-five years to life. Tony's new Mom and Pop, as he called Ernie, got married and adopted him, and he moved to New Jersey with them and Vicki's two daughters from a previous marriage.

After leaving the hospital, Tony had a stroke that gravely weakened his left side. In his book, he implied that his fragile health made it impossible for him to attend school; but with home tutoring he earned a high-school diploma by the age of thirteen. Then, in 1991, Tony developed AIDS. When he wrote "A Rock and a Hard Place," he'd already lost his left leg to the disease and had been in and out of comas. But Pop, a gruff ex-Air Force sergeant who carried a copy of the children's classic "The Velveteen Rabbit" with him everywhere, taught Tony that even death can be mastered through love and faith.

Still, Tony's troubles often seemed overwhelming. Monette counselled Tony through the stroke, the amputation, a debilitating shingles outbreak, neuropathy, and other tribulations. "We heard how Ernie had been called back into secret duty during the Gulf War and wasn't allowed to write, how Vicki had had a car accident and miscarried Ernie's baby," Wilde said. "I've lost eighty-seven friends and two lovers to AIDS, and none of them went through half of what Tony did. Tony figured out right away that Paul was a phone slut who would give him endless attention. Paul was dying, and I told him, 'How many hours are you going to give to your family, how many to your work, and how many to a complete stranger who's three thousand miles away?' "

Monette was only the first of Tony's telephone confidants. In addition to Mom and Pop, Tony secured a new Dad in Jack Godby, a leader of the AIDS Mastery Workshops, whom Vicki enlisted to counsel Tony over the phone. He and Tony got along so well that Tony took Godby as his middle name. Tony also became close to a friend of Vicki's named Jerry DiNicola, an emergency-room doctor and former medic and P.O.W. in Vietnam who gave up his career to treat Tony exclusively. Jerry, whom Tony refers to as his Body Mechanic, is described in the book as a rough-talking former chess champion from Brooklyn who rides a Harley-Davidson. Jerry was in the apartment with Tony and Vicki at all hours, and friends describe listening anxiously on the telephone line as he performed at-home lung surgeries to ease Tony's breathing. He also sometimes acted as Tony's emissary, as when he called Tony's hero, Fred Rogers, in Pittsburgh, to ask if he would speak with the dying boy. Tony ended up advising Rogers about whether to deal with AIDS on his show, and Rogers wrote an afterword to Tony's memoir.

The publication of the book gave Tony entrée to a wide new group of friends. In late 1992, Armistead Maupin, after reading the galleys of "A Rock and a Hard Place," asked David Groff, at Crown, if he could put him in touch with Tony. A few days later, Maupin heard a nervous, piping voice on his answering machine. When he called back, he soon realized, he said, that "Tony knew more about life than I did. He was one of the most sparkling personalities I've ever encountered, full of irony and good will. Although he was straight, he was more sophisticated than any child I've ever known about homophobia. He called me Dicksmoker, which I thought was very funny." Soon the two were speaking almost every day. Tony even sent Maupin a lucky root-beer bottle cap, the sole keepsake of his former life with his family. "By the fourth phone call, Tony was saying, 'I love you,' treating me as a parent," Maupin said. "It really got to me."

One day after Maupin had known Tony for about five months, Terry Anderson, who was then Maupin's partner, took the phone from him and chatted with Tony and then with Vicki. A plain-spoken man in his forties, Anderson remains close to Maupin, and he had joined our conversation in Maupin's living room. "I kept Vicki talking," Anderson told me, "because I was thinking, This is so weird! Vicki's pitch was higher, but her New York accent was the same as Tony's, and so was her cadence, her rhythm. A chill literally went down my spine." After hanging up, Anderson turned to Maupin and said, "I can't believe you've never noticed—they have the same voice."

"Yeah, it's very similar."

"No, it's the *same* voice."

At first, Maupin couldn't make sense of what Anderson was saying: Tony had too much intelligence and emotional force to be a hoax. He played the guitar, drew life-like sketches, recited from memory "American Pie" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and loved to listen to oldies stations and read baby-boomer touchstones such as "Jonathan Livingston Seagull."

Maupin never said anything to Tony about Anderson's suspicions. He knew that Tony was self-conscious about his voice, which was airy and lilting; it had never broken, Tony told friends, because AIDS had forestalled his puberty. Tony was also eager to be liked. He was attuned to the slightest wavering of a friend's attention and leaped to address it (sending letters that said, "I guess it was kind of dumb to think you didn't like me," or "We are *definitely* friends"). He had an instinct for what a particular listener wanted to hear. With Paul Monette, he talked about how medical technicians made a ten-dollar bet across his recumbent body that he wouldn't survive until Christmas; with Maupin he was sardonic and salacious. One day, Maupin told Tony how disappointed he was that PBS had not renewed the "Tales of the City" TV series. Then Tony's call-waiting clicked. Tony returned after a minute and said that Fred Rogers had been on the other line, "and he says to tell PBS to go fuck itself."

"Mister Rogers said *that*?" Maupin asked.

"Oh, yeah, you'd be surprised how he talks." (Fred Rogers, who is a Presbyterian minister, calls the idea of his using such vulgar language "ludicrous.")

A few weeks before the publication of "A Rock and a Hard Place," Maupin, perturbed by his doubts, called David Groff. Maupin said to him, "I would not want this to get out, but do you know anybody who's actually met Tony Johnson?"

As Maupin recalls, Groff said, "Hold on," and closed his office door. When he returned, he said, "You're going through what I went through six months ago, the same doubts. Everyone goes through them."

"Have you met him?"

Groff admitted that he had not, nor had anyone else he knew. "Tony's like God," he said. "He's someone you just have to believe in."

Although Crown had paid only five thousand dollars for "A Rock and a Hard Place," it engineered an extensive publicity campaign. In the spring of 1993, Tony was the subject of a number of feature stories, including one on the front page of *USA Today* and one in the *Post* which began, "Tony Johnson is the bravest teen in America."

Then Michele Ingrassia, a *Newsweek* reporter, read the book. She thought it was strange that the jacket had no author photo, she told me recently, and she was puzzled by sentences that didn't sound as if they had been written by a teenager: "Diseases were a means of financing sports cars for cocky physicians who thought they had the world by the short hairs by virtue of their prescription pads." Ingrassia was also troubled that most of the friends Tony mentioned died or moved away in the course of the narrative. The book's facts were hard to check.

Ingrassia began to investigate. In "The Author Nobody's Met," which ran in *Newsweek* in May, 1993, she wrote that no one at Crown had met Tony Johnson and that the publishing house would not provide verification of his existence. Not even a worker who had installed a computer in Tony's house on behalf of the Make-a-Wish Foundation had met the bedridden young writer. Ingrassia suggested that Paul Monette might be the book's real author.

The article caused a stir, and the *Times* of London cancelled a plan to excerpt the book. Tony was devastated by the story, and he burst into tears on the phone with his friends, including Maupin, who pretended to be bewildered by the allegations. Monette, who had certainly not written "A Rock and a Hard Place"—as Ingrassia now acknowledges—told reporters that the article was "scurrilous," and added, "You know, I've never met Philip Roth, either, but it never crossed my mind that he doesn't exist."

Still, Monette was having doubts of his own. According to Winston Wilde, Monette couldn't help wondering why no one who had helped Tony over the years—some teacher, doctor, or tutor—had stepped forward to vouch for his existence when the *Newsweek* article appeared. And Tony's story seemed slippery in its particulars: he had altered a number of the names and locations in his book. Monette figured that these emendations—and the fact that Vicki kept changing her phone number—could be explained by the family's wish to hide from the sex ring that had preyed on Tony. Tony had told Monette that his father had been murdered in prison, but that

SUNDAY SERMON:
DOES GOD PREFER PARTICULAR SPORTS TEAMS?
SIPRESS

other rogue cops in the ring still wanted Tony dead. But could it really be, as Tony had told him, that former New York Mayor Ed Koch and Sammy Davis, Jr., were members of the sex ring, too?

Monette started to look at passages from Tony's book in a new light. For example, Tony had boasted that his school essays on "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" were pure fiction:

> It was easy for me to go on for pages about things that never happened. . . . Charlotte, the spider in *Charlotte's Web*, knew what she was talking about when she said that humans were gullible, that they believed anything they saw in print.

"Paul defended Tony out of love and because he was worried about having been duped," Winston Wilde says. "He also felt that the voice of a kid with AIDS was important for people to hear, even if it might be fiction." Nonetheless, Monette and Wilde decided to fly to New York, take a suite at the Plaza Hotel, and bring Tony in from New Jersey for a press conference to settle the matter. Wilde called Vicki to tell her their plan, explaining that Monette's reputation—as the alleged author of "A Rock and a Hard Place"—was on the line.

"My car is not working," he recalls Vicki telling him.

"We'll send a limousine."

"Tony can't go in a limo—he has an oxygen machine."

"We'll send a van."

"I'm not going to let him go all that way." Vicki, who was usually quite calm, had raised her voice.

"Fine, we'll hold it at your house."

"I won't have the press at my house."

"Well, where and when do you want to do this?"

"I can't afford to put my Tony through this."

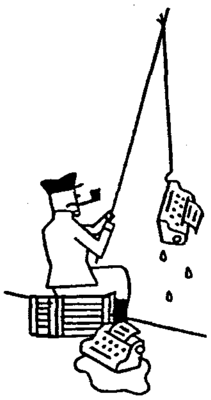
"You can't afford not to, Vicki."

The press-conference plan was abandoned, but the questions about Tony seemed to be resolved later that week, when Leslie Dreyfous, of the Associated Press, visited him in Union City. Dreyfous had interviewed Tony by phone and had written an inspiring profile of him ("His Pop is black, his Dad is gay, his disease is loathed and his arms stretch wide"), and Tony's family chose her to be the verifier. Another A.P. reporter wrote a story about the visit, and he quoted Dreyfous as saying that Vicki had established stringent ground rules limiting what Dreyfous could say about the circumstances of the visit, but that she'd met Tony in person. She said that his face was swollen, and that he was wearing glasses and a Yankees cap, and he spoke to her in a voice that was "the same as the one I've spoken to over the weeks."

The cloud lifted. Yet after Monette died, in February, 1995, Tony phoned Armistead Maupin in tears, saying he felt betrayed by what he saw as Monette's withdrawal. He had been similarly upset by Keith Olbermann, of ESPN. They had become close after Olbermann read Tony's book and wrote him an admiring note, and Olbermann had occasionally dropped get-well messages to Tony into his "SportsCenter" broadcasts. At Tony's suggestion, they started to collaborate, over the phone, on a novel about baseball. But after the *Newsweek* article, Olbermann stopped calling, having decided, he told me, that "there is no Tony Godby Johnson."

Tony also lost the confidence of HBO, which had wanted to turn "A Rock and a Hard Place" into a cable movie. In 1992, HBO had hired Darryl Ponicsan, the author of the novel "The Last Detail," to write the screenplay, and after Ponicsan read Tony's memoir he phoned him to fill in some of the biographical gaps. Soon Tony was calling Ponicsan Poppa D. Tony loved giving gifts—many of which carried a distinctive sweet and spicy smell—and Ponicsan says that he was overwhelmed, that Christmas, when Tony sent him a watch, cufflinks, and a down vest.

Ponicsan turned in a script in May, 1993, and the network was eager to go forward. At the end of 1992, it had paid Tony an option of twenty-five thousand dollars, rushing the check through at Vicki's request, because she said that Tony didn't have much time left, and she wanted him to have a festive final Christmas. An additional hundred thousand dollars was due when the movie got made, but after the *Newsweek* article appeared HBO and its insurers wanted reassurance. They agreed to proceed only if Tony would meet with Ponicsan, who had offered to fly to New Jersey from his home in Seattle.



But Vicki said no. Tony was down to a single T-cell and was vulnerable to infection. She also warned Ponicsan that if he learned too much the vicious pedophilia ring would be after him, too.

When I talked with Ron Bernstein, the agent who had brokered the movie deal, he said, "Why wouldn't Tony just meet with Darryl to make one hundred thousand dollars?" He continues to be disturbed by the case. "As an agent, I have to believe I know voices and can discern the truth on the phone," he said. "But I believed in Tony."

Tony's health remained precarious over the next few years. He was sometimes in the emergency room three times a week, and his AIDS-related toothaches were so severe that he told a friend, "I was begging my dad to kill me." Even so, this period was a relatively happy one for him. In 1994, he became the co-leader of an online chat room called Teen Talk, where he established many close friendships, and in 1997 he set up his own Web site, Tony's World. He contributed a regular column for the *Gregory House Gazette*, a Hawaii-based newsletter for people with AIDS. And he wrote an unpublished novel, "Blame It On the East River," which contained a character modelled on Maupin.

In early 1995, a Manhattan television producer named Lesley Karsten read Tony's book and thought that he would be a perfect subject for a documentary about children that she was working on for ABC. Karsten got in touch with Tony, and he agreed to participate. He asked Armistead Maupin and Terry Anderson to consult on the project, and in late 1995 they flew to New York and met Karsten and—for the first time—Vicki Johnson. Tony had often described his Mom as "a babe," so Maupin was surprised to be pulled into an affectionate hug by an extremely heavy blond woman. "Tony later told me that she had gained all the weight after she took him on," Maupin said. He and Anderson had hoped to meet with Tony while they were in New York, but Vicki said he was too ill.

In March of 1997, ABC aired the documentary, "About Us: The Dignity of Children." It was a series of vignettes about people who'd had tough childhoods, among them the show's host, Oprah Winfrey, and the *Times* editorial writer Brent Staples. But the star was clearly Tony Johnson, who was filmed running in a baseball uniform and then glowering on a subway platform. As the credits revealed, "Tony" was actually a child actor named Steven Parenago, but it was Tony's voice narrating his story and admonishing viewers, "There is nothing that can kill anybody quicker than constant humiliation."

"Tony became very much a voice of the project," the program's executive producer, Fred Berner, said recently. "Out of the ashes and darkness of his own story, he was able to speak for compassion and love." Berner, who had several telephone conferences with Tony, was surprised by how protective Lesley Karsten had grown toward her subject. "His problems became her problems," he said. "Tony reached Lesley in a place that may have been beyond the call of duty for a nonfiction producer." Berner was also troubled by the mechanics of their interviews. "We had to orchestrate a series of phone calls, by Lesley, through Vicki. The logistics were mysterious at best. But getting involved in suspicion seemed to undermine Tony's profound contributions to the movie, and his message. So I never asked Lesley if she'd met Tony. I didn't want to know."

As Maupin grew entwined in Tony's life, he kept telling the story to his friends, and eventually he realized that the tale had all the enticing ambiguities of fiction. In 1994, he signed a six-figure contract with HarperCollins to write a novel inspired by Tony. But for three years he found himself unable to write a word. "Every time I allowed myself to think that he didn't really exist, I felt a clench of guilt in my gut. So I kept talking to Tony as if everything were fine. I broke my brain down the middle."

Terry Anderson had begun referring to Tony as Tiny Tim, and he came up with various schemes to unmask the ruse. In one, he and Maupin would invite Vicki to lunch while they were in New York; when Vicki arrived at the restaurant, Maupin would excuse himself and call the apartment in Union City to see if Tony answered. Maupin rejected this idea. "He didn't want to do it," Anderson told me, "because he didn't really want to know the truth."

Maupin and Anderson made plans to see Tony on three occasions; each time, Vicki informed them at the last minute that Tony's health was too precarious or that he was too contagious with drug-resistant tuberculosis. Finally, in 1997, when Tony was nineteen, Armistead called him from Manhattan and said, "I will come see you tomorrow wherever you are and stand with a mask on and wave at you." Tony said that that would be wonderful, and he'd consult his mother and call back to make a plan.

Two weeks passed. When Tony eventually phoned Maupin in San Francisco, the novelist expressed his frustration: "I feel like I'm being played with here." Tony started crying. "Don't you think I want to meet you?" he said. "You'd be at the top of my list—you'd be there with my sisters! They can't even come into the room anymore. The doctors are dressed in spacesuits—I have no immune system at all."

Anderson, who is himself H.I.V.-positive, was dubious about these medical details, especially since he had helped get Tony into an experimental pediatric-AIDS protocol in San Francisco, only to have Vicki drop the topic.

I spoke with Dr. John Phair at Northwestern University School of Medicine, who is a leading expert in the life expectancy of AIDS patients, and described what I understood to be Tony's condition: the onset of AIDS in 1991, the minute T-cell count in 1993. Dr. Phair said that, under the best of circumstances, Tony "would have been in the five per cent who lived to get therapy" with new protease inhibitors, in 1995.

He also had tuberculosis, syphilis, and constant bouts of pneumonia, I said.

"He's very, very lucky," Dr. Phair said.

And he'd had a stroke, his left leg had been amputated, he'd had neuropathy and shingles, and he had lost his spleen and at least one testicle.

There was a respectful pause. "This is one unique individual," Dr. Phair said.

In 1997, a few weeks after his third attempt to meet Tony, Maupin called to tell him that the *Newsweek* story had

"Would it be possible to get baked beans on toast? I'm not British—I'm just crazy."

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fired his imagination, and that he was working on a fictional version of Tony's story. Maupin feared hysterics, but Tony said, "I know what fiction is. I know you love me and I can trust you."

When Maupin called Tony two weeks later, however, the phone had been disconnected. Friends say that Tony's phone calls became increasingly infrequent, and in January, 1998, he stopped updating his Web site's "Thoughts of the Week." Tony told some of his friends that he was shuttling between the National Institutes of Health, in Maryland, where he was being treated with human-growth hormone to gain weight, and Vicki's new house. It seemed that Vicki and Pop, whom none of Tony's friends had heard about in years, had got divorced. Vicki had become close to Dr. Marc Zackheim, an Illinois child psychologist who had written Tony a fan letter. As Tony later told Maupin in an E-mail, "One thing led to another and they got married." By 1998, Vicki had left New Jersey and was living with Zackheim, in Lake Bluff, near Chicago. They subsequently adopted four boys, all brothers.

People who met Tony online after the middle of 1997 never heard much about Vicki. Now when Tony referred to "Mom" he meant Lesley Karsten, the ABC documentary producer. As far as Tony's new friends understood, he was spending some of his time with Karsten at her Manhattan apartment, along with Jerry DiNicola, Tony's Body Mechanic; Karsten's answering machine says, "Leave a message for Lesley, Jerry, or Tony." Karsten and DiNicola, astonishingly, had sent an announcement to friends saying that they had been married in October, 1995.

In recent months, I have left numerous messages for Karsten, but she has not responded. Those of her friends whom I was able to speak with describe her as a generous woman who delights in amateur opera productions. She did leave a message on my editor's voice mail, saying that, as far as Tony is concerned, "I am Momma, and he is the gift of my life. I love him beyond measure, I love him beyond language." Tony told his friends that Lesley and Jerry were now caring for him full time, even though Jerry had recently been diagnosed with AIDS himself.

In a chat room called Wholesome Hugs, Tony befriended a former nun named Megory Anderson, and he told her that his biological parents were Jewish. She put him in touch with her friend Ze'ev Falk, an elderly rabbi and scholar in Israel, and Falk began to exchange E-mails with Tony. Tony told him that he thought he was going to die soon, and that he wanted a rabbi. According to Anderson, Falk was planning to pass through New York in the fall of 1997, and he made an appointment to meet Tony. But when he arrived at Karsten's apartment she told him that Tony was too fragile to see a visitor. A few weeks later, Karsten summoned the rabbi and said, "Tony is dying of pneumonia. It won't be much longer."

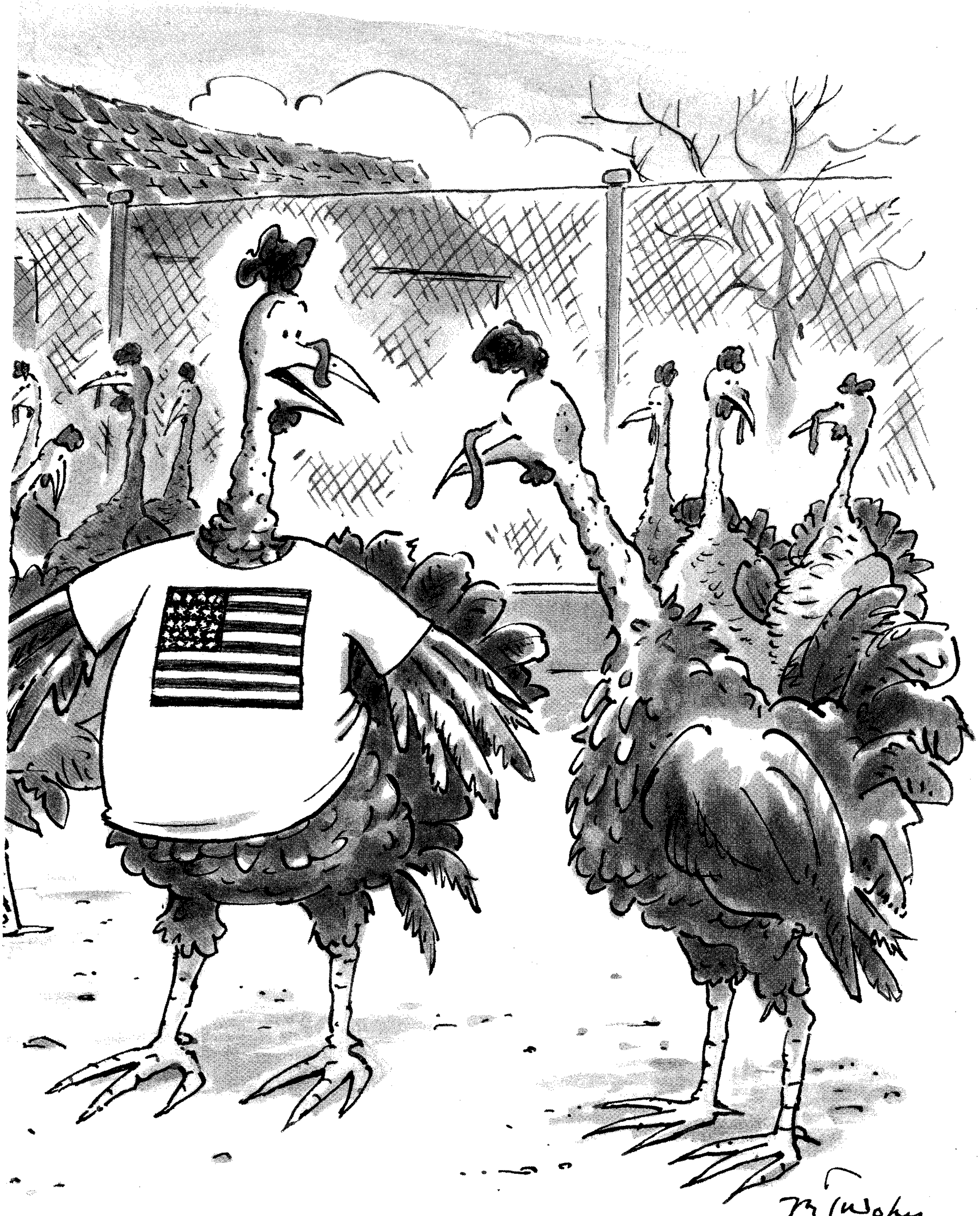
Falk flew back to New York from California. When he finally reached Karsten's apartment, he was turned away again: Tony was too sick to be seen. "We were all distraught," Megory Anderson told me. "Ze'ev kept calling to find out how Tony was, but the number had been disconnected."

In February, 1998, Tony sent a disturbing E-mail to his friend Amanda Kernish, a senior at the University of Delaware. They had been close for nearly four years, and she had helped Tony lead the Teen Talk chat forum. Tony told her that he was undergoing lung surgery at the N.I.H. the following day and that this might be it. "Pray for me," he wrote.

Over the following weeks, Kernish called and E-mailed Tony repeatedly. He did not reply, so she E-mailed Lesley and Jerry. "I was incredibly anxious and upset," she said. "But I never heard a word from anyone. I finally decided that he must have died."

After listening to Tony's friends tell their stories, I decided to go back and check some of the details. I began with Leslie Dreyfous, the A.P. reporter who had verified Tony's existence in 1993. In September of 2000, after Armistead Maupin published his novel about Tony, "The Night Listener," he received a letter from Dreyfous, who had married and is now Leslie McCarthy. She said that she had experienced "a clammy flashback feeling" when she read a review of the book. She had stayed in touch with Tony, and he had sent her gifts at the births of her first two children. But something had always seemed amiss.

McCarthy told me that although she felt that she had seen a boy of the "right



"It's worth a try."

age, right height, right voice, and with what appeared to be one leg," now she had begun to have "creeping doubts" that it was Tony Johnson. Abiding by her original agreement with Vicki, McCarthy would not clarify the precise circumstances of the meeting, but she said, "I did not sit on the bed with him for hours, as I would have liked—the ground rules were very strange." She went on, "I was always bothered by the disappearance of Ernie"—Tony's adoptive Pop—"and their vagueness on that point. I thought of staking out Tony's house, believe me. I still have questions."

I called the Manhattan district attorney's office: no one there recalled a trial of a cop who had abused and prostituted his son. And no one at the New York State Department of Corrections had heard of a former cop being killed in prison between 1988 and the present.

I called a number of current and former employees at Crown, seeking to discover what evidence had made the house feel, as a spokesman had said in 1993, "satisfied" about the truth of Tony's story. The few who returned my calls professed ignorance. Tony's agent, Wendy Weil, declined to speak with me. The book's original editor, David Groff, responded to several of my questions about Tony by repeating, "I know he does exist." He said, "To me, what's really interesting is how little people allow themselves to believe." Then he hung up.

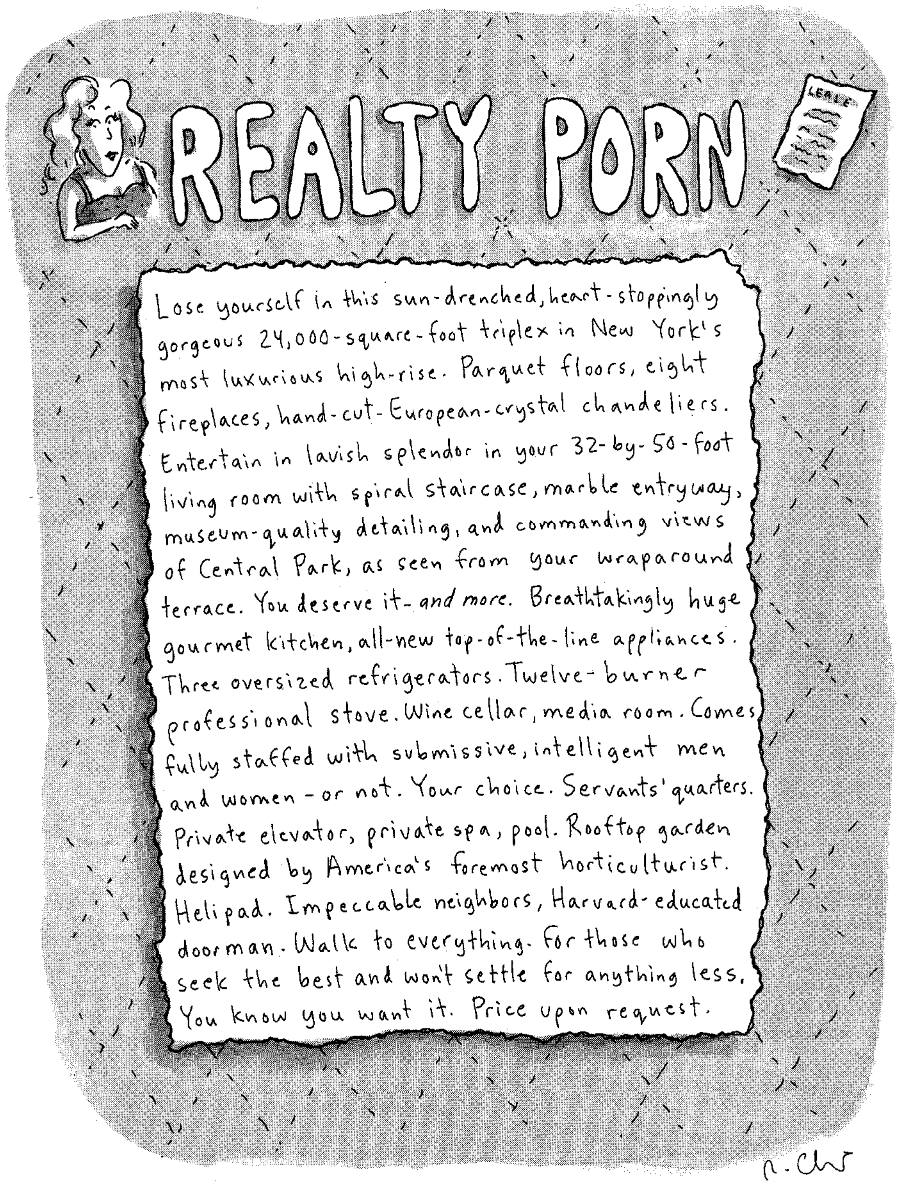
I was unable to search for Tony at New York hospitals or the N.I.H., because patient information is private. So I looked for him at Lesley Karsten's apartment house—a big white brick building on the Upper West Side—during the day and at night, and spoke with the doormen on each shift, both of whom had worked there for years. I showed them photographs of Tony and Jerry. Neither man recognized them. Fred Berner, the documentary producer, dimly recalls meeting Jerry DiNicola once with Karsten, but no one else I spoke with had met him in person. Furthermore, DiNicola is not licensed as a doctor in either New York or New Jersey, and his name is absent from the data banks of the American Medical Association and the American Board of Medical Specialties. According to Department of Defense records, no Jerry DiNicola was ever a P.O.W. in Vietnam.

I made two visits to Union City, just across the Hudson River from Manhattan. The neighborhood where Tony purportedly lived for most of the nineteen-nineties is largely Hispanic; the apartment where he received mail, and where he told Armistead Maupin he lived, is in a nondescript gray building above a Sav-Mart pharmacy. Everyone in the neighborhood remembered Vicki, who had lived in that building for years with her parents and her divorced brother, Vicente. Her name wasn't Vicki Johnson, though; it was Vicki Fraginals. Her father had died shortly before my first visit; her mother is still alive, but I was unable to get in touch with her.

None of the neighbors I interviewed could recall seeing either Ernie (Pop) Johnson or his son, Tony. "I've lived on the block thirty years," said Raquel Rojas, who runs a local day-care center, "and I've never seen anyone like a white boy with one leg. A neighborhood like this, you would notice."

I spoke with Marlena Fraginals, an eighteen-year-old who seems to be the model for Tony's sister Gina in the book. She was working at a day-care center down the street from Vicki's former apartment. She and her sister, Amy, are the children of Vicki's brother. Marlena said that she'd heard about Tony from Vicki, but had never seen him in person. Nor had she ever seen Ernie. I called her father, Vicente, to ask if he had ever seen Tony. "I don't know who this kid is you're talking about," he said. "I don't know anything about him at all."

Marlena told me that she thought Vicki had worked as a nurse and as a writing teacher. But records show that Vicki was never licensed as a nurse in


REALTY PORN
LEASE
Lose yourself in this sun-drenched, heart-stoppingly gorgeous 24,000-square-foot triplex in New York's most luxurious high-rise. Parquet floors, eight fireplaces, hand-cut-European-crystal chandeliers. Entertain in lavish splendor in your 32-by-50-foot living room with spiral staircase, marble entryway, museum-quality detailing, and commanding views of Central Park, as seen from your wraparound terrace. You deserve it—and more. Breathtakingly huge gourmet kitchen, all-new top-of-the-line appliances. Three oversized refrigerators. Twelve-burner professional stove. Wine cellar, media room. Comes fully staffed with submissive, intelligent men and women—or not. Your choice. Servants' quarters. Private elevator, private spa, pool. Rooftop garden designed by America's foremost horticulturist. Helipad. Impeccable neighbors, Harvard-educated doorman. Walk to everything. For those who seek the best and won't settle for anything less. You know you want it. Price upon request.

New York or in New Jersey, or as a social worker in either state.

I went to Emerson High School, Vicki's old school, a few blocks away, and looked her up in the Class of 1975 yearbook. She was listed as Joanne V. Fraginals. She had blond hair and a pleasant smile, and was noticeably overweight. Joanne had not been voted Most Anything in the senior poll, but, as a former teacher and a former classmate told me, she'd seemed "nice." Under Joanne's yearbook picture, the legend read "Appreciates 'Oldies but goodies' . . . warm-hearted and friendly." Her plans were listed as "Free-Lance Journalism."

Vicki did not return any of my messages. But Jack Godby, the AIDS counsellor who became Tony's dad and who remains close to him, warned me that my inquiries were futile. "Before I came along, names were changed and all kinds of things were done with records," he said. "So you have no chance of ever finding out the real story."

Years ago, Vicki told Darryl Ponicsan that she knew Mario Cuomo through their work together on a children's committee. She said that Cuomo, as governor, had helped to speed up Tony's adoption, to alter certain records, and to keep the trial of Tony's parents out of the papers. I called Cuomo at his law office in Manhattan. He told me he did not recall dealing with a Tony Johnson or a Vicki Johnson or a Vicki Fraginals.

At that point, last April, a surprise expert weighed in with a definitive explanation for the Union City mysteries—Anthony Godby Johnson himself. "I have heard that you are trying to find information about me," Tony wrote in a brief E-mail. "Why don't you ask me?" I wrote back, expressing pleasure at the contact and explaining that I was trying to discover what had happened to him. I also asked if he didn't think it might be time, at age twenty-three, to meet some of his friends.

I received a long E-mail in reply. Tony began by calling my letter "presumptuous, disrespectful and contemptuous," and went on to suggest that he wasn't worth writing about: "I am boring, sometimes depressing and lovable only to those who really love me. I don't love many people and call very few friends." He said that the house in Union City was just his mailing address; his real address had been—and remained—confidential, because people often responded to his story by wanting to make him their guru. One man, he wrote,

> sent me a photo of his penis, a penis he claimed was too large to slide a condom on and that was why he got HIV. There was a woman who staged her death and memorial service and wanted me to "be there" while she took pills to "euthanize" herself. People wanted me to talk to their children, a teacher wanted me to write to her students once a week. . . . I paid a high price for people calling me an inspiration, and it wasn't anything I sought. . . . Just because I choose to speak to people or chat on the computer it doesn't mean that I have to go further.

Addressing other points of concern, Tony said that he treasured his friendship with Rabbi Ze'ev Falk but would never have asked him to attend his deathbed, because when you're dying you want to be alone: "If in fact Rabbi Falk was misled someone else did it because I did not." He also said that he considered Armistead Maupin only "a casual friend":

> I did care about him because he was funny, sometimes loving, and I thought he was a decent person. I felt he respected me. He didn't and now that is clear. When he told me that he intended to write this book, he acted as though he and Terry Anderson were my champions and my dear friends. I asked Armistead point blank, "Do you believe in me?" And he, in his most reassuring voice, said, "Of course."

He concluded with an anguished rumination on the problems of the world, and advised me to write about children who live in misery, because he himself was a symbol of nothing. "I haven't hung out on the Web for close to two years, because I don't feel like it anymore," he said. "It takes energy I don't have. You ask about my health. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. What more can I say?"

I wrote back and asked him if he ever thought about why so many people saw his life as a parable. (I also apologized for having hung up a few days earlier, when I had called the Zackheim house: I hadn't expected the old phone number to work, and was unprepared to conduct an interview.) And I noted, delicately, that Vicki had lived in the building in Union City for most of the nineteen-nineties, and that he had written a book that centered on being adopted into her house. As they both often spoke on the same phone calls, how could he not have been living there, too? He did not reply.

I was therefore unable to broach another topic: through someone close to Tony, I had received an audiotape, made in 1993, of a phone conversation that included the voices of both Vicki and Tony. I had asked two premier voice analysts to examine the tape. One expert said that because the quality of the tape was poor, and because Tony and Vicki hadn't used many words in common, he was unable to attempt a determination about whether they were the same person. But Tom Owen, who has worked with the New Jersey State Police and the Justice Department, felt that the tape provided sufficient material. Using a machine called a spectrograph, Owen compared such characteristics as "aural mannerisms, perceived pitch, rate, breath patterns, and syllable coupling." He concluded that "the adult female" was speaking nearly throughout the tape—that Vicki, in other words, was pretending to be Tony. Confoundingly, however, Owen believed that a small percentage of Tony's speech on the phone tape was the voice of an actual child. This conclusion of Owen's made no sense at all. If Tony was real, there was no need for Vicki to fake his voice. If he wasn't, why would she fake his voice at one point and then have a real child play him at another?

It was another instance in which it seemed that Tony simultaneously both did and did not exist. He was like Schrödinger's cat. In 1935, the physicist Erwin Schrödinger explained a core principle of quantum mechanics by proposing a thought experiment. If you placed a cat in a cage with an apparatus that has a fifty-per-cent chance of killing the cat within an hour, then what is the state of the cat after the hour? Quantum theory says that until you observe the cat it can be thought of as simultaneously dead and alive.

By eluding definitive observation, Tony remained perpetually real and perpetually imaginary.

After Tony cut off communication with me, I flew to Chicago and drove to Lake Bluff to try one last time to speak with Vicki. I found her house, walked up a slate path, and rang the doorbell. Two minivans were parked out front, so I expected that both Zackheims would be at home.

Dr. Marc Zackheim, a burly man in his fifties with a pleasant smile, came to the door. When I introduced myself, his expression clouded. "Hold on," he said before

I could explain further, and shut the door. After a minute, he poked his head out: "It'll be a second—we're on the phone."

Ten minutes later, a police car pulled in to the driveway. A young cop hopped out and charged me at a half run. "Could you take your hand out of your pocket, sir?" he said. "Could you move away from the house?"

A second prowl car drove up, and an older cop got out. After conferring with Dr. Zackheim, the older cop told me, "He wanted you led away in handcuffs."

Back in New York, I began to hear from a number of people in Tony's inner circle whom I had tried to reach earlier: many of them sent me E-mails that were copied to Tony's agent, Wendy Weil. Often, a question I had asked one person was addressed or dismissed in an E-mail from another person. In June, a seventy-six-page dossier arrived at *The New Yorker;* it had been put together by Lesley Karsten and was intended to prove Tony's existence. It contained letters testifying to Tony's extraordinary qualities and decrying my supposed persecution of him, lengthy résumés detailing the credentials of the letter writers, and excerpts from Tony's writings.

More recently, the magazine received letters from three friends of Tony's who declared that they had met the boy in person. Tony's godmother, an artist named Sharon Kagan, said that a few years ago she was "in the same room with Tony and Vicki, at the same time." She added that Tony no longer looked like his earlier photos: "AIDS has taken its toll on this sweet boy. He is thin, to the point of being emaciated, and has a horrible skin condition." Leana Jones, a twenty-three-year-old writer, noted, "I am not a member of Tony's family and there is no motive I could possibly have to lie about any of this. . . . I would only be risking my own integrity."

At no point did Tony's friends provide any medical, educational, or financial records to make their case, but Lesley Karsten followed up with an E-mail and a long letter to the magazine that dismissed the idea of a hoax. She denied having summoned Rabbi Falk to Tony's deathbed, quoted from an article she said Tony is working on about the unhappy experience of being written about, and said that his work was a gift to everyone who had ever been abused: "If Mr. Friend discredits Tony's experiences, he does the same for hundreds of others. But perhaps that is the ultimate goal." She added that she could forward "hundreds of letters attesting to Tony's existence and his impact on people's lives."

A few weeks ago, I received a phone call from a woman named Lisa Lieberman Doctor and her husband, Dr. Ron Doctor, who had both contributed letters to the dossier. Ron's letter, written in his capacity as Tony's psychotherapist, warned that my inquiries were driving Tony into a potentially fatal depression. The Doctors now told me that Lesley Karsten was an old friend of Lisa's, and that she had stayed with them in Los Angeles for several months during the past two summers. Throughout this period, Lesley had told them, Tony was in an isolation ward of the N.I.H. Their understanding was that Lesley's husband, Jerry, was the only doctor allowed to see Tony, whose weight had recently dropped to fifty-three pounds; Jerry lived with him in quarantine and was treating him with experimental bone-marrow injections. For three years, Lesley told the Doctors, she had not seen her husband or her adopted son. (Karsten denies saying this.)

As a kindness to Lesley, Ron Doctor had informally counselled Tony, without pay, over the phone and by instant-message for much of the last year. Jerry DiNicola told Ron that these sessions brought Tony's fever down from highs of a hundred and five degrees, and Ron felt that he was helping to keep Tony alive.

A few days before they telephoned me, the Doctors said, they had got a call from an acquaintance of Lesley's who had mentioned that Jerry DiNicola had AIDS and was a patient at the N.I.H. They were astounded. Why hadn't Lesley ever told them this? They began thinking, Why was it that Tony's and Jerry's vocal patterns were so similar? Why couldn't they recall ever hearing a story from Lesley or seeing a photograph which established that she and Jerry had, at least once in the course of their six-year marriage, been in the same room? Were Tony and Jerry merely voices created by Vicki Zackheim? Could Lesley have been hoodwinked into believing that she had a husband and son?

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Ron went to his computer that night and instant-messaged Jerry, bluntly announcing his suspicions. Jerry kept dodging his questions, and grew increasingly defensive. "How do I deal with Tony?" Jerry wrote. "You tell Tony that you are a phony, and that that aspect of you that *is* Tony should forgive you," Ron replied. He has not heard from Tony or Jerry since.

During this online exchange, Lesley telephoned the Doctors. Ron angrily asked her, "Are Jerry and Tony the same person?" and Lesley hung up. Since then, Karsten has cut off all communication with the Doctors.

Right after Ron logged off with Jerry, the phone rang again. It was Marc Zackheim, and he sounded uncomfortable. When Lisa told him about Jerry's shiftiness, Zackheim explained that Jerry was in the Witness Protection program. This was completely bewildering—as far as the Doctors knew from Lesley, he'd always been Jerry DiNicola from the DiNicola family of roofers in Brooklyn. (In an E-mail to the magazine, DiNicola said, "There were name changes and they are confidential and they will remain so.") A few days later, Ron received a blistering E-mail from Father Anthony Fedell, a Franciscan priest based in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, who ran the Wholesome Hugs chat room. Father Fedell said that he had met Tony and Jerry, and that Tony was devastated by Ron's "amazing, perfidious change."

Ron answered Fedell by laying out the case for a hoax, and concluding, "Here is my concern. I believe that Vicki will 'kill off' Tony after the article in order to bypass any further inquiry. . . . You and I are going to be used to perpetrate these exits. I will be blamed for Tony's death because I abandoned him in his moment of need. . . . Jerry will follow from a broken heart and his own struggle with AIDS. You will be asked to give last rites and to comfort Lesley," who will be left "alone and abandoned."

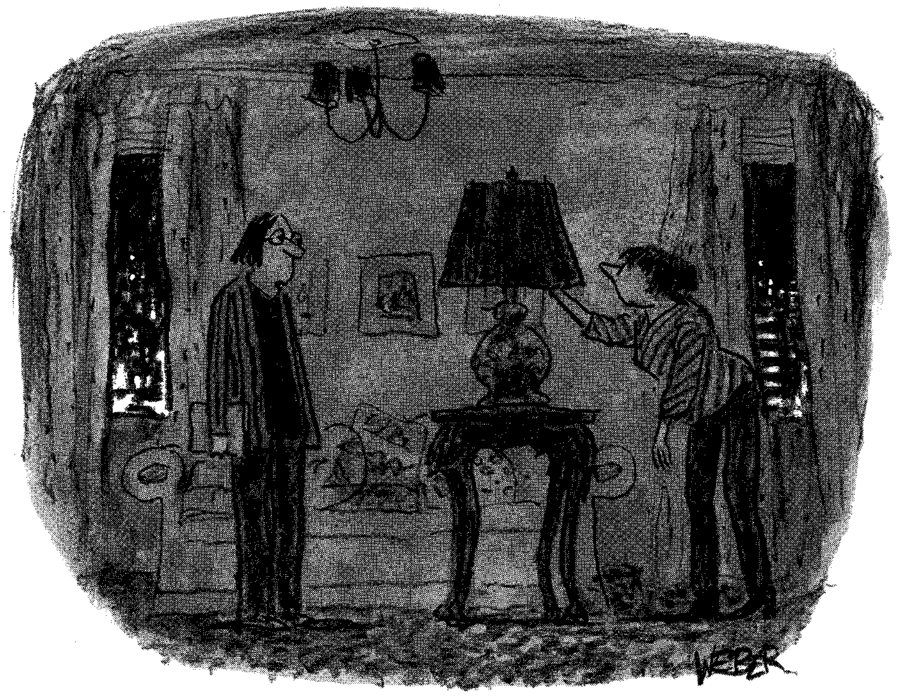
A few months earlier, Fedell sent me an instant-message telling me, "I have been with Tony many times and have blessed him, and even given him the last rites!" I asked Fedell why Tony was wary of letting anyone meet him. The instant-message dialogue continued:

> Father Fedell: There are those who do not believe, even if they see. It has to do with not being pure enough, I think, to understand someone as remarkable as Tony. . . .
>
> Me: If I could meet with you, and you could tell me in person that you've spent time with Tony, that would be very substantive. (The problem, I'm afraid, with all respect, is that online I can't be sure who "you" are.)
>
> Father Fedell: You cannot disprove the existence of truth. That simply renders you a fool. You are on a mission of folly, I assure you. And I am outraged by it. . . . If you had any IDEA of Tony, you would be humbled by knowing him and ashamed of your current activities.

It seemed to me that Tony's story is a powerful sorting device that confuses even as it clarifies. It separates the cynics from the romantics, yet leaves both wandering in the enemy camp. Cynics decide that Tony's story is simply too filled with darkness, death, and shocking incident to be true; that human nature, in other words, is gentler and more predictable than Tony says. Yet romantics who choose to believe in Tony must also believe in a world where celebrity sex rings operate with impunity and orderlies make routine bets on when sick children will die—a savage world, indeed.

Armistead Maupin's fans snapped up "The Night Listener," and it became a *Times* best-seller. On a book tour last fall, Maupin was buttonholed a few times by readers who asked if the book was based on Tony Johnson. He always ducked the question, trying to assuage his conscience about having written the book in the first place. Maupin told me that he also hoped that the book would encourage Tony—if he exists—to come forward and meet with him at last. He had sent Vicki an early copy for Tony to read. She had told Maupin that she'd send it along: "Don't worry. I'm very good about not reading Tony's mail." Having completed the book, Maupin had a fresh perspective. As he talked with Vicki, he thought, It's him—I can hear it in her voice. He has not heard from Tony again.

"The Night Listener" has an ambiguous ending. When Gabriel (the character based on Maupin) arrives unannounced at the house of Donna (the character based on Vicki), she shows him an empty hospital-style bed and tells him that Pete (Tony) has just died.



"You know, I've often wondered where the fuse box is myself."

• •

A few days later, Pete calls Gabriel in San Francisco: "I know what Mom told you, but she was just trying to get people off our backs. . . . I couldn't stand the thought of you thinking I was dead. You're the only reason I even feel alive."

When I visited Maupin again recently, I noticed that he had removed Tony's photo from his living room. But he told me, "Tony's still more real to me than many people who demonstrably do exist. I wrote the ending of the book the way I'd like it to be in life, because I'd have great trouble killing that child in my head."

For her part, Lisa Doctor says, "It blows my mind that I was ever drawn in. But in some sick way I'm going to miss Tony. I liked knowing that he was out there in his oxygen tent espousing love."

After I stopped trying to find Tony, I started thinking about "The Velveteen Rabbit," the book that Tony's Pop carried with him everywhere and that Tony sent as a gift to his friend Amanda Kernish. It occurred to me that the children's classic embodies the yearning at the heart of the Tony Johnson story. In Margery Williams's tale, a stuffed rabbit, given to a boy as a Christmas present, becomes a real rabbit after the boy contracts scarlet fever. The rabbit comes alive because the boy loves him:

> "Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."
>
> "Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
>
> "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

Armistead Maupin and Terry Anderson recently sent me Tony's first letter to them, from 1992. It was a Christmas card. The front shows a jolly Santa, and under it is the famous question that the schoolgirl Virginia O'Hanlon asked the New York *Sun* in 1897: "Please tell me the truth. Is there a Santa Claus?" Inside was a warm note in Tony's hand, and also a printed message, the reply that the *Sun's* editor, Francis P. Church, made to O'Hanlon. Beside it, Tony had written, "My favorite," with an arrow. "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist," Church reassured Virginia, and Tony sought to reassure Maupin and Anderson. "You might get your papa to hire men to watch all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see." ♦

FICTION

OUR HOUSE

BY MARTIN ROPER

The house is on a corner, and although my father always said never to buy a corner house, we did. Everything that can be wrong with a house is wrong with this one: the roof leaks, the guttering needs replacing, there are broken windows and the frames are warped and rotten, the bath is cracked and the toilet solidly blocked, the wiring is dangerous, and the wallpaper is soaked with rising damp. Four feet of plaster will have to be hacked off, the walls drilled and injected with chemicals, the brick then left bare for six months to dry out, and, finally, the walls will have to be replastered. Floor and ceiling joists are rotten. Once the renovations begin, a ceiling collapses, barely missing the gas man and the builder. There is no heating. The gas cooker fails the Bord Gáis test and it and the pipes to the street have to be replaced. It is a dark and musty house on a corner between a middle-class and a working-class area, and everyone said not to buy. But we did what every estate agent hopes a couple will do: we fell in love with what the house could be. The house, like us, was full of potential and hope.

We are in love with notions of each other. We are in love with opposites. Ursula is a nonpracticing Protestant with a Catholic name, and I am a nonpracticing Catholic with a Protestant name. She is from a solid middle-class background that slipped a little after her parents divorced. I am from a lower working-class background but am now living in a middle-class world. Neither of us ever wants to have children. We are disillusioned with Ireland. She is writing good poems and an insipid novel and has a job at the newspaper. I am jealous of her expanding life. She thinks I'm funny, and I never dare admit how seldom she gets the joke; besides, I am drawn to her serious nature. So we buy the house made of the crumbling Dublin yellow brick on Bath Avenue in Irishtown. We take photographs of each other leaning against the "Sold" sign. She buys us matching key rings, two silver fishes. I make a joke about the religious significance, and she says that is not the point at all; we share the same March birthday and we are two faithful fishes swimming forever in a sea of sharks.

We hire skip after skip and fill them with the old belongings left behind after the owner died. Post still comes for Anna Condron, now nearly three years dead. The world takes its time letting the dead go to their graves. Work leads to work. There are problems we haven't bargained for. The water cistern in the attic bursts, but only after the plumber has installed new pipes leading to it.

There are nice surprises. When we strip the old plywood on the stairwell, we discover there are original posts hiding there. As the months pass and spring comes and goes, we learn what a beautiful garden Anna Condron had planted. Pale-pink roses. Black-eyed Susans. Snapdragons. Flowers we can't name. We grow to love the plocking sound of tennis from the courts that run up against the end of the back garden. Ursula finds five hundred pounds under the carpet in old twenty-pound notes. I want to blow it. She saves it for our future.

We're so engrossed that we don't notice the children who are gathering at the corner every day. The mischief they get up to is the kind that bored children get up to everywhere. They start ringing the doorbell and running away, screaming at us as we come and go. But there is something else, a hint of menace. The children play football late into the night under the street lamps. Their ball bangs repeatedly off the gable. Even though we are exhausted, we can't sleep. Summer comes and with the school holidays the trouble escalates. I can't remember the first time I told the children to move away from the house, or when their language worsened and they went from calling us silly names to more vulgar ones. I can't even remember the first broken window. The children begin to take on individual identities. There is Larry. He is about six, and he is the youngest. He is put up to much of the trouble. I watch Larry from the window as he tears the windscreen wipers off the car.

There are days when I talk with them as I load the skip. They ask questions non-stop. They ask if we are married, and for some reason I lie and say no. This marks us in their eyes. Larry asks me if I am married, and I tell him I am married many times. He looks at me and says, Holy God will come down and fuckin' kill ya if you're not married. Darina, one of the tallest, about fourteen, will be pregnant soon. It is in her eyes. There is Alan, a boy who holds Ursula in great disdain. He spits at her and calls her a cunt. When he hisses the word, he means it. They make fun of the way Ursula speaks. They think she is American, with her accent that is a mixture of her English father and her Celtophilic mother. There is Sabrina and Joseph and Elaine.

Something is happening every day now. A bag of rubbish is thrown over the back wall on top of the new flower beds. Graffiti is sprayed on the side of the house: *Psychohead! Cuntface! Geebag!* Ursula spends more and more time at the office. Her career with the *Tribune* is up and running. We have been married three years before we decide to buy the house. Almost as soon as we do, I know it is a mistake. It is her money, and although I try to make up for this by working hard on the renovation, I can't put it out of my mind that it is her house. During an argument about where we should put the cooker, she snaps that it is her cooker and the house

JAMES NACHTWEY/MAGNUM

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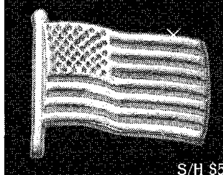

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belongs to her. I look at her, dumbfounded, and her eyes dare me to question her. She has said it and, even though I can see the regret in her face, I can see, too, the defiance.

She never apologizes about the cooker. It isn't her style to apologize, too much of the father in her for that. Shoulders back, look them straight in the eye. Never complain. Never explain. Never apologize. By the time she calms down, she knows there is a coldness in me. The inequality has been spoken. I don't have the courage to confront her, and when, later, she offers to put the house in both our names I dismiss the idea. It is her house. And the situation is exacerbated by the odd coincidence that her mother has a man living with her, a man more than twenty years younger who is living off her. Mulvany has no job and does nothing around the house except leave dirty ashtrays and teacups strewn about the floor. He's a drunk. There are no parallels drawn between mother and daughter. There aren't any—except the crucial fact that both women own their own property and the men in their lives are moneyless. It all lies there between us like a stillbirth.

One night, there is a knock on the door. I get out of the bath to answer it. One of the neighbors is standing there, heavy-mustached, topless, and wearing only a pair of jeans; a stupid, good-looking, chest-tattooed piece of shit from head to toe. He is smoking, and he points his cigarette at me and says that if either that bitch or me ever as much as looks at his children again he will fucking kill us. I ask him to come in, hoping if he steps into the hallway he might calm down, but he stays where he is, with one foot on the door saddle. He goes on and on, calling us perverts, a word that one of the girls on the corner, Sabrina, uses. He puts a foot into the hallway. The ash lengthens on his cigarette, and his reluctance to tap it on the carpet gives some hope he isn't a complete maniac.

—Your children are ruining our lives, Ursula says.

I look around at her, astonished she has interrupted him.

—Shut the fuck up, you, the man says.

—You shut up and learn to control your children.

—I'm warning you, I'll rip you from your cunt to your chin.

—Go ahead.

She stares up into his face.

—Go ahead if you're so brave. Rip me.

—I'm warning you, if you as much as look at my kids . . .

—Rip me. Go ahead.

He walks away. She follows him down the garden path. He stops, looks at her, and she spits in front of him.

—The state of you with your shirt off. Best part of you ran down your mother's leg.

He stops again, looks slowly over his shoulder and sneers at her. He turns the corner and walks down Bath Avenue and out of sight. She never takes her eyes off him.

—Jesus, what did you say that for? He could have killed us.

—You talk that way about them.

—About them, not to them.

We go to the Gardaí that night and report him. His name is Grimley, and we laugh at how life has picked the right name for him. There is nothing they can do except warn him. They can come when we call if the children are giving trouble, but they can't arrest them—they are too young. They advise us to move. The world is a small place that night, our lives dictated by children.

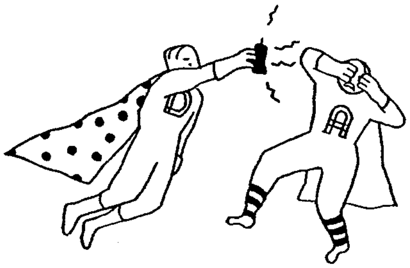
The next day, the bathroom window is broken. We replace it. When I finish repainting the frame, it is broken again. I replace it again. When other things happen, I stop telling Ursula. My silence is not stoicism—I am ashamed I have no control, that with each passing day I am less and less of a man.

On a quiet Sunday morning, we are lying in bed, still asleep. A ball thuds off the gable. Then it hits the window by the bed. We have designed a stained-glass window that throws pink and green light into the room. A sheet of unbreakable glass is in front of it. The ball is thrown harder and harder against the window. We lie there listening. Ursula is wiping her hand over her knuckles, slapping the back of her hand, drubbing herself until I can't bear it, and I jump out of the bed, pull on my clothes, and run out. They are already out of sight. I run and run and keep running, the rims of my shoes cutting into my sockless ankles. I run through Irishtown, and on into Ringsend and there they are outside a shop, eating sweets. They all see me except Alan, who has his back to me. I lunge at the child and throw him to the ground. He screams, defiance in his eyes. I sit on him and hold him by the ears. I want to lift his head and bang it on the footpath. I want to bang it until he stops moving, but I can't do it. I hate myself. I hate the fact that the child under me is a child and doesn't really understand how he is tormenting us. He will grow out of it. He will grow up and breed more of his own into the world. He won't remember the misery he has caused us. I walk back to the house. I sit down on the front step, and when I take the box of cigarettes out of my pocket I see that I am shaking and sweating. The packet is crushed, but none of the cigarettes are broken. Little shits. Little shits. I light the cigarette. People pass on their way to Mass at the Church of the Star. I flick the cigarette out into the road. I've had enough of it. Ursula is in the kitchen feeding the cats, Willy and Vomit, when I come in.

—We're selling.

—No way. I'm not letting them win. You can go if you like, she says, as casually as if she were deciding whether or not to go to a film. I nod, and I can see I have nothing left then. She doesn't hide her disgust—I am a coward in her eyes. I am a coward. But I understand something she does not about these people. I grew up with their like. She will not win. There is no winning with them.

There are older boys on the corner later that day. Teen-agers. They are lining up and throwing stones at the back windows. They are casual about it. They are in no hurry. She telephones the Gardaí and they say they will have a car around in minutes. A window breaks. I go downstairs and walk out. I walk slowly toward them. There are about fifteen in all, the local children and these boys I don't know, who must be from Ringsend. They start to laugh. I don't care anymore. I stare at them one by one. They wait for me to do something. Suddenly I remember the final scene from "High Noon" and smile. They burst out laughing, as if reading my mind. I do nothing but stare. As I stand there in the middle of their cul-de-sac, I realize that most of their houses look out onto this road. Their parents are home from Mass now. They will have had their Sunday dinner and be watching the television. I can feel eyes, other eyes, on me. Some of them must be watching this. I have no idea what to do and so I turn and walk away. Stones start to fly. I walk slowly, with every fourth or fifth stone hitting me. There are apples, too. They must have raided an orchard. The apples bounce and smash off the road, making it more humiliating. I know Ursula is watching from the window and that she, like me, is at a loss. A stone hits me in the head, and then the children stop firing briefly, testing the moment. I keep walking, swallowing the spittle in my throat. A squad car turns onto the road and pulls up beside me. The boys scatter like startled birds. The Gardaí chase and catch two of them. They are taken to their houses. Both fathers say their sons have been with them all afternoon and close their doors. A cop tells me I should go up to the hospital to have my head looked at, and it's only then I feel the iciness at the back of my head. My hair is wet and sticky. Come on, says the cop, we'll drop you off.



I lie in bed, stunned by the fear that has overcome me. Ursula offers me a drink, but I want nothing except silence. The stitches are tightening in my scalp. I stare up at the sloping ceiling overhead and close my eyes. I am nine years of age and walking home from dull, stupid school. I will be nine years of age forever. I'm walking on the side of the road that the houses are on, looking in each window in case I can see something shocking—a man doing the foxtrot with an Irish wolfhound, an old woman shooting up with heroin, a baby painting itself purple, a couple smiling at each other. My mother has left home and my father is working all the time. Painting houses for rich people. The Whites, the Greys,

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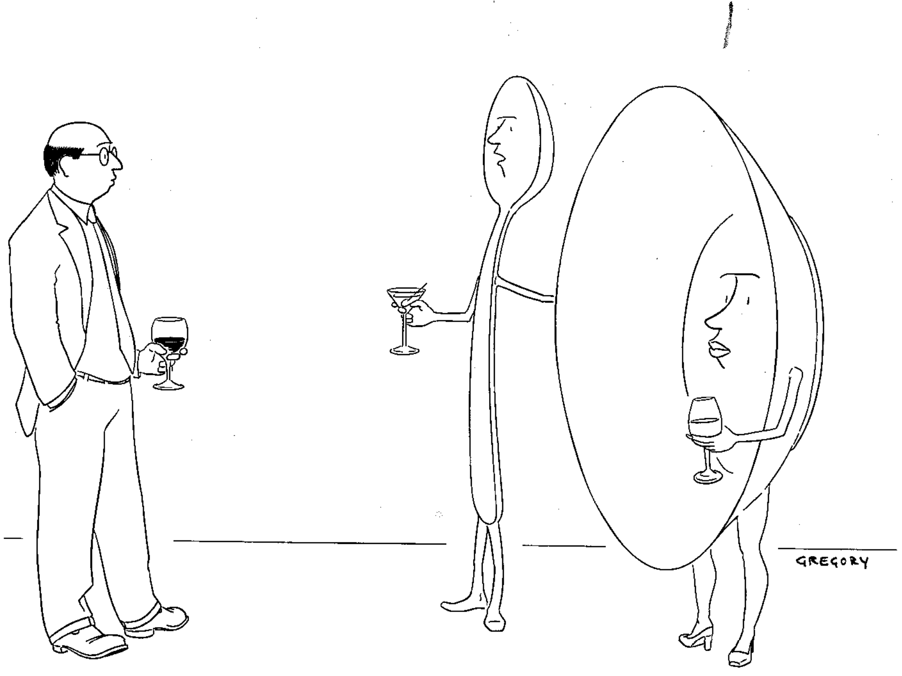

"We're raising the children as forks."

• •

the Browns, the Blacks, Protestants who can't even pick good colors for names, let alone for their houses. I light a cigarette from the tip of the one I'm about to throw away. I'm getting the hang of inhaling. The railway, high on the embankment, runs along the other side of the road. A rock bounces off the ground in front of me. I keep walking. Another rock whacks off the footpath. I put my schoolbag in my right hand as a shield. I look up. There are two boys walking along the tracks. They are skimming the rocks down off the railway and onto the road as if it were an ocean. They seem bored, as if they didn't care whether they hit me or not. I keep walking. The road is a mile long, and whether I turn around and go back toward school or go on for home makes no difference—I have about the same distance to go either way. We're doing "Macbeth" in school. *In blood stepp'd in so far.* I walk slower. Never let anyone see your fear, my father has always told me. Dublin's inner city in the seventies is a no-go area, and showing courage is not so much a mark of foolish heroism as it is a way of survival. It's normal. A rock hits me on the hip. I keep my pace. I can sense their excitement. They're wondering how far to go, each rock flying out farther into an infinity of malevolence. Something hits me on the side of the head, and I fight the urge to lift my hand to the soreness. I keep walking as if I feel nothing. They are running now, running down the tracks, away from the edge of hate.

I don't know why they picked me. Because I walked home alone. Because I had no mother. *Your ma's a pro!* Because I didn't make friends. I liked poetry, and I wasn't going to run into school with a Dylan Thomas poem as if I had discovered a two-headed frog. Nonetheless, I wasn't prepared to sacrifice my integrity to be in the club. My integrity. Nothing was as pure and absolute as the stubborn integrity of my childhood self. But later I would get over that. One had to go with the craze of the moment—go on the mitch, set cats on fire, break windows, force younger children to drink a jam jar full of piss. All of this interested me in theory. I liked to think about the boy drinking the urine, what was going on in his head. And what was going on in the head of the boy who forced it down the throat. But I despised them for their vindictiveness and never would be a part of it. Be your own man, my father always said. I wasn't sure what being my own man entailed. I thought it meant I had to be alone. My father took good care of us, and I never doubted his word. So I joined no clubs. I stayed out of the gangs, and that made me different. Inside, I wanted to be what every child wants to be: the same.

My father didn't believe in fighting.

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He told me a man's job was to show that men could be men without behaving like wild animals. One day in school, Mooney picked on O'Reilly. O'Reilly was always picked on because he couldn't stop sucking his thumb. McNally, the science teacher, came into the classroom and broke the scrap up. But we all knew what it meant. Four o'clock outside the back gates. About sixty of us stayed late to watch. Mooney started right in. He shoved O'Reilly onto the ground and kicked him in the head. He kept kicking him in the head, and O'Reilly made no sound. We watched. Usually there was pushing and shoving and name-calling and a bit of a punchup and everyone cheered until someone stopped it. Mooney was kicking O'Reilly's head like it was a football. Blood was coming out of his mouth and out of his ear. I couldn't bear it and jumped in. I woke up in Temple Street hospital. Mooney had pulled an iron bar from his jacket and hit me with it once on the side of the head. I lost the hearing in my left ear. I never got in a fight after that.

Medbh calls to visit. Ursula's friend. I am out in the back chopping wood. It is a quiet day, and I am loving the freshness of the air, being alone, doing a bit of physical work. Each split of wood the skull of Darina, Alan, all of them.

—That's very macho for you, Medbh says.

—How's it goin'?

—You're sweet. Ursula is lucky to have such a sweetie.

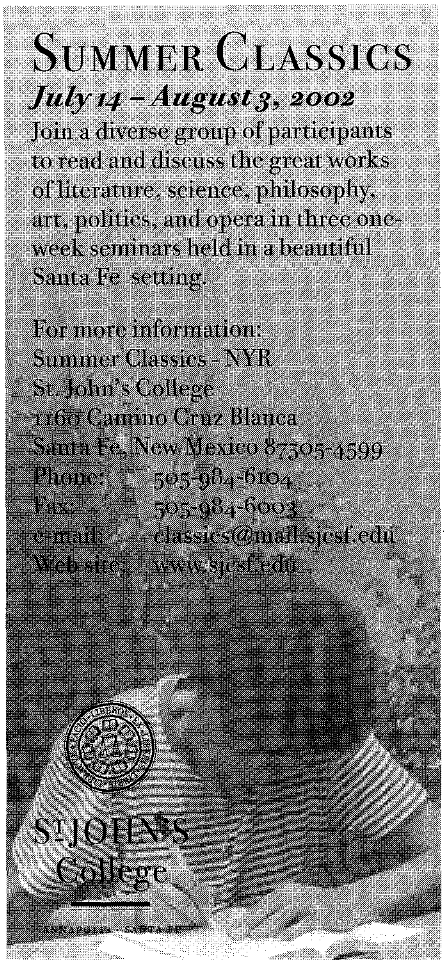
I invite her into the house, and we sit by the fire and talk. I don't know her well and don't particularly like her. She is too certain. After a cup of tea and a chat about the delights of having a home, she tells me that she is lonely. She misses being a single woman. We look at each other, both of us thinking the same thing, thinking about Brefini, her husband. She knows by my eyes that it's the wrong thing to say to me. I feel old, having learned that sharing such intimacy is not intimacy; it's nothing but a slide into collusion. She asks for my advice about a man her sister is interested in, and I tell her I don't know. I don't know how to get a Rawlplug in a hole without bending it; how would I know about this man her sister wants? She thanks me for my advice, warms herself a moment longer by the fireside, rubbing her hands on her thighs, lingering to dispel the awkwardness between us, and then she leaves. She has no idea that she has offended me. It has nothing to do with Brefini; it is my own frail ego. Why should she think that a lighthearted comment about macho—or the lack of it—would be hurtful? Why would she think that calling me skinny or boyish or sweet could ever be construed as offensive? For a woman to say she is envious of a man's skinniness is like complimenting an obese woman on her jolly nature. It translates from compliment to insult in a finger click. Sweet is the trickiest one of all to handle, because it seems innocuous. Here's the rub: women tell me men are not sweet. Women tell me men are bastards. So, somehow, even though sweetness is a virtue, one is less of a man for possessing it. My head begins to ache, as if cold air were being forced through the healing wound. It was stupid to start working so soon.

We go to Brefini and Medbh's house on a Sunday afternoon to talk about books, a dull Dublin version of the Bloomsbury set. About half a dozen of Ursula's friends talk and talk, and the only aspect that appeals to me is the decadence of drinking wine in the middle of the afternoon. I hate the way they tear books apart for the sake of it. They are like young barristers cutting their teeth. Today they are discussing Cormac McCarthy's latest book. Ursula and I read it in bed together the night before. Rather, she read it, and I occasionally read over her shoulder. We both hated it. Man's struggle with the universe against an imponderable sunset. She finished the book late in the night. I remember listening to some of the locals coming home drunk. The next day, battle ensues over the book. The men are attacking Ursula. It is turning into the great monotonous gender debate—the men liking the book and the women not—and I hope my erudite opinion will turn the argument around.

—Horseshit and sunsets in an America that doesn't exist, I say.

—You haven't even read the book, she says.

Everyone looks at her, and then at me. I smile my finest roguish smile. It doesn't hide a thing. I go silent and the



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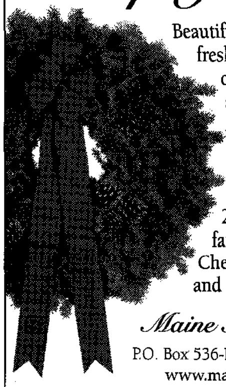

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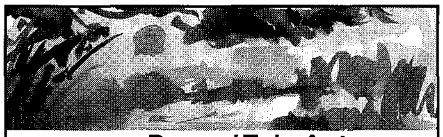

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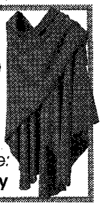

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men all laugh. On the way home, she asks me why I am silent, and I can say nothing with the anger in me. She sighs, resigned to the silence.

—You know what Medbh told me men want, Ursula?

—Tell me, Stephen, what did Medbh tell you men want?

—Three things: to be fed from time to time, a good blow job, and never to be made to look silly in public or talked about behind their backs.

—That's four.

—I didn't give a fuck about the book. I was supporting you.

—You lied. Arguments should be based on facts.

—That's the mistake women make in arguments with men. You think we work on logic. You can't beat men with logic. Men make the illogical sound logical. Get over it. But, hey, if you want facts, we'll live on facts. We will live with facts. *Never expect me to defend you again. Never, never expect my trust.* The trailing unspoken ends of sentences. The ones that count.

We are painting the house and can hear the music from a concert in Lansdowne Road. I am using a roller on the ceiling, and she is doing the walls. I want it all to last as it was. With cats and roses and the sun on the bed in the morning. The sleepy slosh of her early-morning piss. Driving her in to the office. Letting her off in Lower Baggot Street at the *Tribune*. Kissing. There would always be one last thing to say. I love you, I would say, and she would smile a gluttonous smile and slam the car door with the noise of Dublin swirling about her. I would watch her from the quietness of the car. I would stare after her, waiting for her to turn. The thought of her caressing me all day long.

One morning, after I let her out at the corner, I see her wave to a man with a heavy duffelbag hanging off his shoulder. He is confident, easygoing—the way he carries himself. He smiles at her, and she smiles back. The exchange flashes like a knife. He shrugs and smiles at something she says, and I sit there in the idling car wondering what she has to say to a man I don't know that could make him shrug and smile. She bursts out laughing and slaps him on the arm. The horrible ease she has with him. Jealousy grips me and I have a stomach-churning insight into what life would be like without her.

I park the car and walk through Merrion Square, through the Lincoln Gate at Trinity, past the chapel where Brefini and Medbh got married. They had said they would never marry—we listened to them rant about primitive Ireland, and then we watched them, as if in a surreal cartoon, marry and have a child and forget all the talk of changing the world. Already their life was swallowed with baby burps and hoping the car would start in the morning. Getting married took the stress out of making the decision not to get married that they were making every day, Medbh said.

I get up before Ursula. While I am waiting for the kettle to boil, I walk out into the cold garden, Vomit and Willy bouncing about my feet. Full of meows and the happiness of morning. We have to let the little bastards out to empty their bladders—they still haven't worked out the cat flap. There was rain during the night. Darkness loosening itself from a dirty sky. The absorbing silence of the city not yet awake. A bicycle squishes down the greasy road. Then the plock of a tennis ball behind the fence. They're starting early today. The whack of a ball, the rattle of the protective wire between the end of the back garden and the courts. A ball is lodged high up in one of the wire diamonds, like an egg stuck in a startled mouth. A man's laughter from the tennis court. Willy scales the fencing to investigate. The kettle whistles and I go in and turn it off before it wakes Ursula. Vomit sits on the builder's cement mixer, staring at her sister.

I blink with pleasure at the memory of her warm body, lost to sleep. Too early to wake her. I tap the foul-smelling cat food into the kittens' bowls, and they race each other to their breakfast as I go upstairs to the toilet. Odd she never flushes. It smells of her. I gaze abstractedly out the window as I urinate. The tennis players are rallying energetically. The man crashes a ball against the top of the net, curses, and sets off to retrieve it. His partner takes off her track-suit bottoms, flattens out the creases in her tennis skirt, and shakes off a chill. She hops on the spot, waiting. Aggression twitches in her calf. She embodies a certain kind of woman: one who dislikes men and, in return, is adored. They pursue her, searching for the nugget of her allure. I dislike everything her taut body suggests. My blood rushes through me. I see myself lifting her tennis skirt and fucking her. The first day I met Ursula, I had to pull my eyes away from her as she walked downstairs to the toilet in the Palace Bar. The sway of her stout buttocks under a white skirt. I felt naked in the pub, as if it were obvious that I was longing for the impossible. I remember not liking her entirely. I drank deeply then, to steady the craving. The tennis ball thumps off the asphalt. Have to get dressed. It's cold in the house. Tonight I'm cooking. The future wouldn't happen. I want a child. The whack of the ball off the tennis racquet. But not with her. I open my eyes, and the world is too real. The sky stares at me indifferently. The mattress moans with her shift.

We are having dinner. She is eating salad noisily. I have begun to drink more. She has stopped drinking. It is her way of telling me she has noticed my drinking. She has begun to know me, know the way my temper flares with the breeze of her perceptiveness, and so she says no, she will have no wine. For a while I cut back, but then I weaken, opening a second bottle at the end of the meal. During this dinner, it's obvious the marriage is slipping. It's like the "L" on her typewriter that can't bring itself to strike paper hard enough to make an impression. The harder the key is struck, the fainter its outline. I wash back the anger; it swims in my ears. I stare out the window at the unfinished garden. I breathe deeply and imagine the sound of her eating as sweet music. She must always have eaten that way. I get up from the table abruptly and leave the room to steady myself. She shouts after me. Do I want tea? Her voice eddies on the waves of anger I leave behind. I come in after an hour's walk, and there is a mug of tea on the table with a saucer over it to keep it warm.

The smell of our sweat has lost its passion. It must have been a long time happening (weeks, months, years?), but now it seems as fast as losing sight of a fish flipping in a river. I start loving her less and am sickened at how easy that is. Only three years married, and the intimacy between us tattered more than the wedding shoes I wear only on Sundays. We sleep in the same bed, but we try not to touch each other. In the night, if I wake up and feel our buttocks meet I move away. I promise myself I will never touch her again, but desire gets the better of both of us. Afterward, I lie there disgusted with myself for being inside her.

August: summer failing to break out of a wet July. The dampness of autumn already setting in. We are tiling in the bathroom upstairs. The telephone rings. We look at each other, at our hands covered in tiling cement. It's Friday evening. Invariably, the *Tribune* rings on Friday evening. Looking for her to go to Leopardstown to cover a race meeting. She must have been first on the list. The eager journalist who drops her life in the sink to ask rich men stupid questions.

—Leave it.

She is wiping her hands clean.

—It might be the office.

—The office is why I don't want you to pick it up.

The answering machine clicks on downstairs before she reaches it, and my father's voice echoes through the house. She looks at me for an instant, and I see suspicion coming into her eyes. She goes into the study next door, picks up the extension, and says hello, and my father stutters and asks how things are. I sit in the bath staring at the half-finished wall, listening to their voices reverberate off the tiles. Ursula puts the phone down and comes back in. I talk out of nervousness.

—Put the lid on the cement or it'll harden.

—So much for keeping it within our own four walls.

I pick up the phone, and my hello is the voice of the accused.

—Is it a bad time, son?

Guilt stiffens in me, caught between

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the two of them, and I tell him I'll call him later. I put the phone down and wipe a smudge of cement off it. The courts are full now with Friday-evening tennis players, ready to bash the week out of their minds. Ursula is washing herself at the bathroom sink, naked except for white knickers and flat black shoes. Her overalls lie on the windowsill. The knicker elastic is cutting into her flesh, the hairs on her legs are standing with the cold.

—They can see you from here.

—Who?

—The tennis players.

—Big thrill. Go tell your daddy.

She dresses and puts on her makeup. She closes the hall door quietly when she leaves. The clutch grinds as she reverses out of the drive. I stand in the hallway surrounded by the tremendous emptiness of her leaving. A moment later, the doorbell rings and I walk slowly down the hall to face her with as much sourness as I can muster. A couple of children are standing in the porch, red-faced and breathless:

—Can we have our ball back, mister?

They step inside to wait. I go out into the back and search for it. Willy and Vomit are fighting on the grass. The normality of looking for a lost ball.

I get the DART into town and go to Scanlon's. Three morose pints. Two men arguing at the bar: It is. I'm telling you it is. You know what your problem is. I'll tell you what your problem is. You don't know what the fuck you're talking about—that's your problem. I walk home in the rain. The phone is ringing when I get to the front door. She's probably gone to her mother's to bitch, and that cunt has filled her with superwoman confidence about her life. I pick up the phone and say hello as dourly as possible. It's my father's voice, a tentative hello.

—What's wrong, Da?

—Nothing's wrong. Is it a better time to talk now?

—I think she's left.

He says nothing. I wait for him to say something, and there's nothing but silence. He's thinking of Ma, of her going. That's what people always do, relate it to themselves, make useless comparisons.

—What are you going to do?

—I don't know. I'll tell you one thing I'm not doing. I'm not waiting for her to come back.

—You could always come down here, not that I want to get between youse.

—I don't want to leave the house empty.

—It's not your house to be worrying about.

Time was that would have started a fight, his saying that, but now it's the words of family, of taking sides, of knowing I have never felt married to her, not long enough married to become the blood tie, to become whatever that thing is that binds a woman and a man. But I'll wait one more night for her, give her until tomorrow.

Ursula doesn't come home that night, and she doesn't phone. I wake up, feed her cats (already the dividing up, it floods in unbidden), and stare out at the rain dripping off the gutter. Fuck it. Fuck her. Fuck whatever anyone thinks. That night, I sit watching the television but I'm only waiting for her to phone. Every hour that passes and she doesn't phone is an hour more to tell myself I'm right in going. I hate that I need her to push me into a decision, but sitting there I know this is the way I am. I leave the television on so the locals think someone is in and I go to the pub for a bottle of whiskey. No messages on the machine when I get back.

Two more days pass with no sign from her. If she expects me to phone her, she can go to hell. She did the walking out. Come Saturday, whether she's here or not, I'm going. The cats can starve. I sleep little on the Friday night, cursing her. I was sure she'd be home by the weekend. The cats wake me, meowing at the bedroom door. I feed them, take my suitcases down to the hall, and walk around the house one last time. But still I wait, each night deciding to give it one more day, each night lying there thinking of my own sins, of my own petty slights, of my stubbornness with her over things that didn't matter. I call Medbh, and Brefini answers. I ask him to pass on a message to her. After I put down the phone, I realize how forced my voice was, controlled and clipped. That it has come to this, a terse message through friends. She can have her time, as much of it as she likes. I'm moving in with my father. She can have Bath Avenue.

My father is reading something out of the paper about Northern Ireland, repeating what he always repeats. Should get a chainsaw and divide North and South and let them float off into the Atlantic. I look up at his racing calendar: October already. Where did September go? I wonder did Brefini give her my father's number but know she has it anyway. I stop listening to my father and realize how much I'm losing: the late nights in bed with her reading favorite worst passages from the books she was reviewing, the walks on Sandymount strand, playing with the cats, pruning roses, sitting in a pub together on a Saturday night, planning. All these things weaken my resolve and I go over and see her in Bath Avenue.

She is in the garden planting sunflowers, clearing the bindweed that is choking the roses. The front door is painted traffic-light orange. I had wanted it red, but the orange looks fine. There is a thud and the sound of running. A dead cat lies on the grass. She doesn't hear it. I lift the animal and throw it back over the wall before she turns. The side of her face is yellow and purple, as if she's gone crazy with makeup.

—Jesus, what happened?

She looks at me and smiles as if I'm a stranger.

—I'm going to kill that tattooed fucker, Ursula. I'm going to kill him.

—It wasn't him.

I pull her to me, and she starts crying. We go into the house and sit in the living room. She was driving down Bath Avenue when a child ran out in front of her. She braked, but it was too late. Her head hit the steering wheel even with her belt on.

—I didn't hit anyone at all. It was a dummy they had made, one of those dummies they make to burn at Halloween. They were waiting for me.

I can't believe she is telling me this. I can't believe the children did this. What was it with them?

—Have you reported it?

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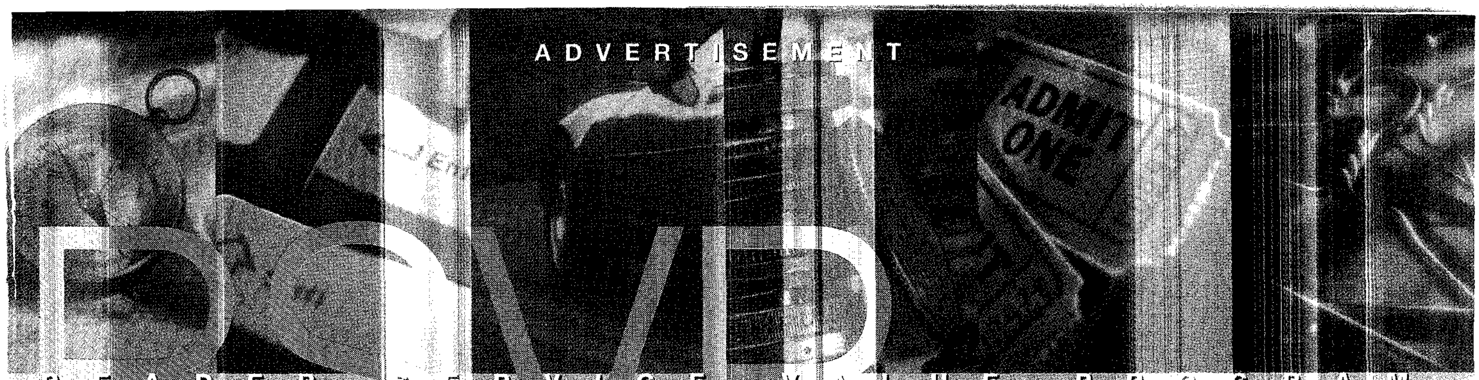

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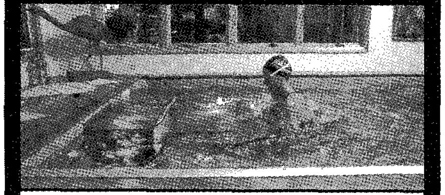

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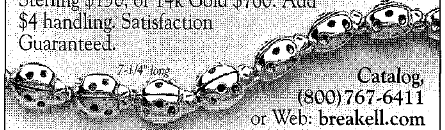

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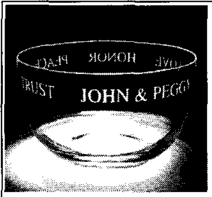

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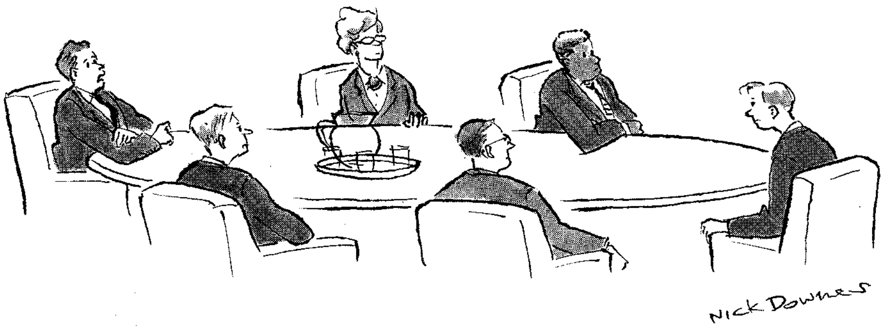


"I really can't emphasize this enough, Peters—you no longer work here."

• •

She looks at me with tired, cynical eyes, an older woman now.

—I told the police. It won't make any difference. Why won't they leave me the fuck alone?

We go to a film that evening. When we get back, the children are in front of the house. I keep driving, and we go to the Beggar's Bush and sit in silence, drinking. It is a public admission of defeat. I am full of rage at the neighbors—not the ones who cause trouble but the ones who don't, the friendly neighbors who know what's happening and do nothing to help. I despise these people who call themselves friends. Grand morning. Sure you have it looking lovely. If there's anything I can do. They do worse than nothing. Their refusal to acknowledge our torment is the loudest comment of all that there is no community in this place that prides itself on its friendliness. The Good Old Dubs.

We start talking. Despite all the disparities, all the flaws, we still like each other and want to be together. I dream of living with her in an old house overlooking the sea. Nothing but the sound of birds landing and scurrying on the flat roof over our heads. If we sell the house on Bath Avenue, we can find a cheap old house by the sea and renovate, and then we will never have to worry about money again. We are young and we can work it out.

This time, she says she will sell. I say nothing about the choice of the first-person singular. We agree to work extra hard on the house to get it finished and put it on the market quickly. My attitude changes overnight. We had taken care to do everything as expertly as possible, staining the skirting boards four times, varnishing them four times. Now I take shortcuts. She doesn't. She is still attached to the house; it has become her love. I grit my teeth when I hear her sanding the downstairs skirting boards, the obsession with smoothness of door frames and windows and walls. I tell her again and again to hurry and not to worry about the fine details. We have finished everything except the papering and painting. The paint tins sit in the kitchen waiting to release their colors. I open them and stir them into life. Yellow, pink, blue, green. Happy colors. I size the walls in the living room and watch the paste dry in. I am plumbing the wall over the fireplace when I sense her behind me.

—What are you doing?

She is standing in the doorway, wiping dust off her face.

—Lining the walls.

—They're not ready.

Her anger takes precedence over expertise.

—If you think they're not ready, you can do it—you can do all of it. Wouldn't that be fun?

—Fine.

—It's not fine. You want to help? Stop being a know-all expert and just get it done. Now fuck off.

—Fuck off, you.

—I should never have married a woman who couldn't say Fuck off properly.

—And I should never have married a man who couldn't fuck properly.

—Maybe if there was someone worth fucking.

—She left your father a long time ago.

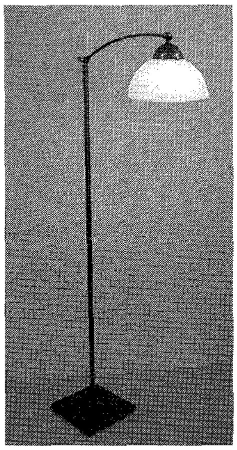
I climb the ladder, hold the roll of paper to the ceiling, let it drop until it hits the space between my toe and the wall, feel the precision of my father working in me. I measure the first length, lay it on the table, and run the other lengths of paper off it. I am happy in my anger. Success lies in letting her go one better in insults and leaving to silence the job of cutting her down. I paste the paper and let it soak in, then paste it again. She is still standing there, waiting for a reply. I start to whistle, the happy whistle of my father when he had to deal with customers looking over his shoulder. In his heyday, he would have a room like this done in three hours. The door slams, and the house, empty of furniture, echoes with her hostility. I am halfway around the room when I notice I'm going the wrong way—the joins in the paper will show. No matter, they won't rise for months. We are decorating the house for someone else now. We are fighting more and more, the arguments only a break from the bitter silence. Despite her independence, she feels let down by the man in her life. I am a coward. I want to run from her. These are the things we don't talk about, the unsaid words that widen the gap in the bed.

She wants to insure that all the floorboards are secure before we put the last of the skirting boards down. I keep going with the lining paper, running it down to the floor. We work in inverse proportion to each other; the more corners I cut, the more care she takes in the details. I watch her comb her hair at night, as I have done every night for years. The slow, rhythmical brushing, the decisive center parting that I love to watch irritates me. We would come to blows if it weren't for exhaustion. She is still fighting the children in her head. The house is papered now, dressed from head to toe. One evening, I come in and she has written poems on the walls in pencil. Sexton, Plath, Ozick, Rich, Bishop, Glück, Levertov. Poems pencilled neatly all over the house. The pencil will burn through the paint, and I sit down under the weight of resentment. But she hasn't done it on purpose, I suppose. Three coats will cover them, and then slowly, over the winter months, when the new occupants turn on the heating, the poems will bleed through and reveal their past. I want to write poems, too, but can think of none. I caught this morning morning's minion. Dapple dawn. When we were young and sucked on country pleasures. Bits. My mind is full of bits. I go up to bed. She is already asleep.

I wake to the smell of paint. She is rolling the walls in the room that was to be her study. Bright yellow. Rolling wet sunshine. She should have done the ceiling first, but I say nothing. All advice is accusation now. I go down and start the kitchen ceiling. Contentment settles in our working. I shout up if she wants tea and her yes sounds like the first casual word she has spoken in months. I go out and get fish-and-chips, and we sit on the stairs eating them out of their bags. We talk about how much longer it will take. The papered walls insulate our voices; our speech seems heavier now. I think about telling her how ashamed I am of my fear but don't. Work is the only refuge left in our marriage.

The final frightening moment in Bath Avenue. The first day that the house is on view. We are running around, lighting fires in the fireplaces, arranging the freshly cut flowers from the garden in vases, turning on all the house lamps, brewing coffee; all the fake things you do to sell a house. The house is alive with autumn-colored flowers: hydrangeas, nerines, fuchsia, chrysanthemums. The estate agent is helping us, and for the first time I notice him noticing us, can tell he knows something isn't right about the relationship. People sense a home where love is dying. The market is buoyant, and we know we will be swamped with viewers. An hour before the viewing, a gang gathers at the corner. We sit in the kitchen on one side of the beautifully dampproofed, beautifully papered, beautifully painted wall, and they sit on the other side, smoking cigarettes. They don't do anything. They don't have to do anything. No one will buy. Already cars are pulling up. It is no use calling the Gardaí. The sight of a squad car will only make matters worse. We hold each other. It is the first time in months we touch. The softness of her against me. That time on our honeymoon. The estate agent tells us to leave and come back after seven.

The house doesn't sell at auction. ◆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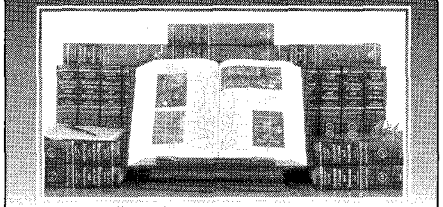
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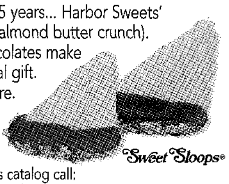
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THE CRITICS

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SLIPS OF THE TONGUE

Before there was Fowler's, there was Fowler.

BY LOUIS MENAND

H. W. Fowler's "Dictionary of Modern English Usage" is one of the fruits of the Oxford English Dictionary. The O.E.D. was (like many Victorian novels) published in parts: it was a serial publication whose serialization took fifty-four years. In 1879, its editor, James Murray, signed a contract with Oxford University Press, in which he promised to produce a four-volume dictionary within a decade. Five years later, he managed to publish the first part: "A—Ant." The dictionary was finished in 1933. (Murray expired in 1915, after reaching "Trink—Turndown," which, if it is not the end of the alphabet, is at least farther than Virginia Woolf's Mr. Ramsay was able to get.) It fills thirteen volumes: almost sixteen thousand pages.

Murray's method was to collect, for each word, specimen sentences from printed works illustrating changes in meaning and usage over time. For many years, Murray stored the slips on which these sentences were recorded in his yard in an iron shed known as the Scriptorium. If it had appeared in a Borges story, the Scriptorium would have figured as a kind of alternate literary universe, in which all the sentences ever written in English have been rescrambled, and transformed into a series of free-verse poems on words—all the sentences with "muffin," for instance, strung together to make a found-object ode to "muffin."

The dimensions of the actual Scriptorium were not so Borgesian, of course, but it was a fantastic resource. It was as though Murray had drilled a shaft into the history of the language, which one might descend and ascend, observing the linguistic striations. The Delegates of the Oxford University Press soon recognized that although the O.E.D. was a publishing triumph ("the greatest effort probably which any University, it may be any printing press, has taken in hand since the invention of printing," the *Times* declared in 1897, after the completion of "Foisty—Frankish"), not many people were likely to rush out and buy a sixteen-thousand-page dictionary. So they planned a series of affordable spinoffs, among them the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (assigned to a man named Little, which shows that the Delegates were not without a sense of humor), the Concise Oxford Dictionary (shorter than the Shorter), and the Pocket Oxford Dictionary (more concise than the Concise). These were all quarried from the big dictionary: they drew on the specimen sentences in the published parts and, in the case of words later in the alphabet, in the warehouse of slips. The press had a dictionary in the works for every market niche. This is where Henry Fowler entered the picture.

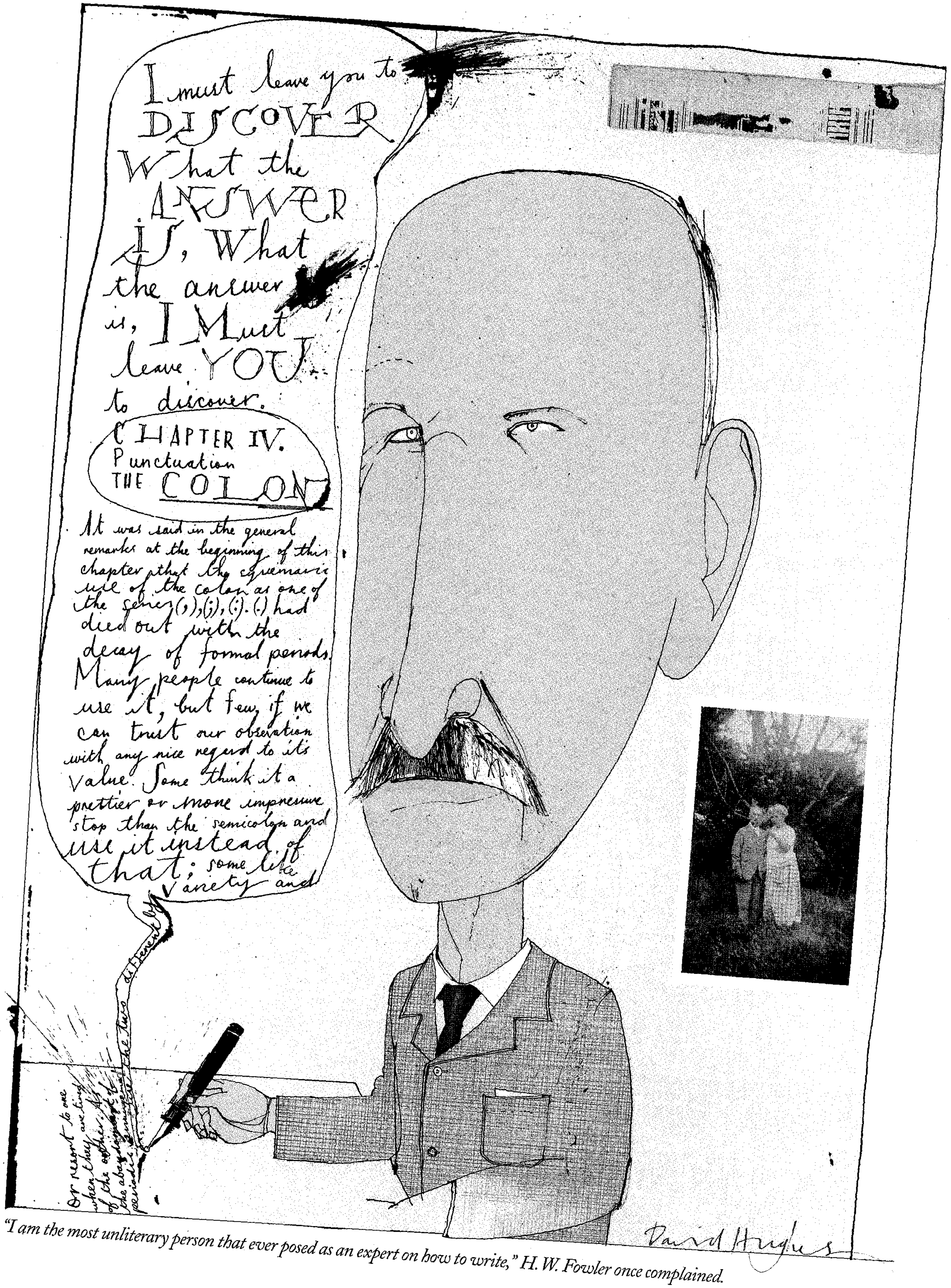
Fowler was born in 1858, in Devon. He attended Rugby and Oxford, but his family was not well-off: his father was a schoolteacher, who died at the age of fifty-six, leaving eight children. Henry was the oldest. After Oxford, he became a teacher at a school in Yorkshire called Sedbergh. He seems not to have been a prime object of schoolboy affection: "He took some knowing" was a typical reminiscence. He had a reputation for rectitude, and after seventeen years at Sedbergh he resigned abruptly, because he had come to the conclusion that his lack of religious faith meant that he would never be promoted to housemaster. He was forty-one. He went to London, where he lived on a minuscule inheritance and the income from his writing, mostly essays of a belletristic nature, which he published with some difficulty. Diminished circumstances had no effect on his sense of what was honorable: after *The Spectator* sent him a check for a piece it had accepted but was unable to run because of lack of space, he refused to write for the magazine again.

He eventually realized that he was too reserved to get far in a literary world that required some talent for social gamesmanship, and in 1903 he moved to the island of Guernsey, a hundred miles off the south coast of England, where his brother Frank had gone into business as a tomato farmer. Fowler lived on Guernsey for twenty-two years. He and Frank became collaborators, first on a translation of Lucian, which Oxford published, and then on "The King's English" (1906), a guide for writers. This led to their employment in the O.E.D. spinoff industry: they were responsible for both the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1911) and the Pocket Oxford Dictionary (which was published in 1924, after Frank's death). It was on Guernsey that Fowler wrote the "Dictionary of Modern English Usage." It came out in 1926, when he was sixty-eight. He died in 1933, the year the O.E.D. was finally finished.

Upright people do not make ideal biographical subjects. To say that Jenny McMorris's "The Warden of English: A Life of H. W. Fowler" (Oxford; $27.50) is the biography Fowler deserves is neither to take anything away from Jenny McMorris nor to say that it is a particularly compelling biography. Fowler was a person who began every day, no matter what the weather, by rising early, running for a few miles, and then taking a dip in the nearest body of water. This, along with gardening, seems to have marked the upper limit of his conception of "fun." He lived alone until he was fifty, when he married a local nurse, almost his age, named Jessie Wills, a voluble woman, part of whose appeal was that she relieved her husband, in social situations, of having to talk.

In 1914, when he was fifty-six, Fowler

CHARLES BARSOTTI; DAVID HUGHES


I must leave you to DISCOVER What the ANSWER IS, What the answer is, I Must leave YOU to discover.
CHAPTER IV.
Punctuation
THE COLON
It was said in the general remarks at the beginning of this chapter that the systematic use of the colon as one of the series (,), (;), (:), (.) had died out with the decay of formal periods. Many people continue to use it, but few, if we can trust our observation with any nice regard to its value. Some think it a prettier or more impressive stop than the semicolon and use it instead of that; some like variety and
differently
the two
Or resort to one when they are tired of the other. As of the abandonment of periodic
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"I am the most unliterary person that ever posed as an expert on how to write," H. W. Fowler once complained.

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falsified his age in order to enlist in the British Army. (Frank enlisted as well; he was forty-four.) He went to France, but although he had joined a battalion reserved for older men, when his real age was discovered he was taken off the front lines, and eventually, to his shame and disgust, he broke down physically and had to be sent home. In all his work for Oxford University Press, he insisted on a flat fee, and protested mildly when the press mailed him Christmas "bonuses" in lieu of royalties, which he had declined to accept. (One feels that the press, for its part, did not exactly insist. All of that generation of lexicographers, in their low-tech world, were overworked people. Murray wasn't the only one to die in harness: so did poor Mr. Little, and so did Frank Fowler. It would be interesting to know how much money Oxford has made on the dictionaries they produced; but McMorris doesn't tell us.) In short, Fowler was a modest, disciplined, and punctilious English gentleman. "He knew what he wanted from life," wrote the man who produced the second edition of "Modern English Usage," Ernest Gowers. "What he wanted was within reach; he took it and was content."

The most striking fact about Fowler's life is his isolation. There he sat, for more than twenty years, in a cottage on a remote island in the English Channel, writing a book that tells readers what the currently accepted pronunciation of "anchovy" is ("Usually ănchō′vĭ"), when to use "gent" ("only in uneducated speech or in jocular imitations of it"), and the special connotation of "pawky" ("The Englishman is tempted to use the word merely as a synonym in certain contexts for *Scotch;* any jest uttered by a Scot is pawky, & pawky humour is understood to be unattainable except by Scots"). Fowler was, of course, a well-educated man, but after he got to Guernsey he rarely read anything except the newspaper. "I am the most unliterary person that ever posed as an expert on how to write," he once complained. And although he had friends and correspondents and collaborators—he was not a hermit—he took pains to distance himself from literary society. He rarely even visited Oxford. Yet his judgment seemed, for several generations of readers, virtually unerring. If it was not the Bible of English usage, Fowler's "Dictionary" was at least the Hoyle's: it was the arbiter of all disputes. Yet its authority is based largely on twenty years of reading the papers and plowing through the O.E.D. and other dictionaries. Fowler essentially intuited the state of the language from lexicographical bits and pieces. Out of the slips, he re-created the tongue.

As McMorris points out, many people who never met Fowler have felt that they "know" him, and this is because, however reticent he may have been in person, he was not reticent in print. "Modern English Usage" bristles with personality, not only in the articles on Fowler's various hobbyhorses, like STURDY INDEFENSIBLES and FACETIOUS FORMATIONS, but in many of the shorter entries as well. The tone is the tone of a schoolmaster, but a rather sly schoolmaster, who won't let you completely in on the joke. "*Welsh rabbit* is amusing & right, & *Welsh rarebit* stupid & wrong": there is a hint of high facetiousness in this, even though no one who reads it will ever say "Welsh rarebit" again. Like the big dictionary itself, "Modern English Usage" is one of those reference books that are read for pleasure even when the need for instruction has been satisfied. It is a classic of the language. The question is: Is it a dead classic?

Any usage manual is bound to seem antique after seventy-five years. Few people today will experience a need to check the correct pronunciation of "puttee" (pŭ′tĭ, not p*u*tē′). Gowers discreetly excised a number of Fowler's entries in the second edition, in 1965; R. W. Burchfield aggressively rewrote many of them in the third, published in 1996. On the other hand, some of the original entries retain their relevance:

> **coward(ly).** The identification of coward & bully has gone so far in the popular consciousness that persons & acts in which no trace of fear is to be found are often called *coward(ly)* merely because advantage has been taken of superior strength or position; such action may be unchivalrous, unsportsmanlike, mean, tyrannical, & many other bad things, but not cowardly.

For the first generation of readers, a large part of Fowler's appeal was his impatience with what he labelled "Superstitions": never begin a sentence with "But," never end a sentence with a preposition, never split an infinitive. His general position was that it is almost always worse to appear to have gone out of one's way not to break a rule than it is to break it

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when breaking it appears to be unavoidable. Fowler wanted writing to be unaffected and clear, and he wanted writers to do what comes naturally. He believed that the ability to distinguish right from wrong in usage did not require any special philological knowledge but was essentially what he called "a matter of instinct."

Still, he did think there were rights and wrongs, and it is easy to suspect that "instinct" is a euphemism (not euphuism: see PAIRS & SNARES) for some more invidious term, such as "breeding." Fowler was a prescriptivist in a profession in which the trend was emphatically in the direction of nonjudgmental descriptivism: the position that whatever people say or write at the moment constitutes "usage," and there is nothing further to be said about it. Even in his own time, he was regarded by some linguists as a dinosaur. An "instinctive grammatical moralizer," Otto Jespersen called him.

Fowler was not offended, and although contemporary prejudice is likely to lie with descriptivism—in Jespersen's time, it seemed the properly scientific attitude; today, it seems the properly democratic attitude—Fowler had a point. A language may be whatever the people who speak that language make it, but "Modern English Usage" is not a book about language. It is a book about idiom, and idiom is language in its moral (also its social, political, and even ethnic) aspect. People make judgments based on usage and pronunciation all the time, just as they make judgments based on clothing and hair style and body odor (not to mention gender and skin color). A speaker whose English is unidiomatic is not saved from ridicule or condescension by the fact that his or her speech is technically correct. There is no more obvious signal that the speaker doesn't "belong" than speech that is supercorrect—a point Fowler made repeatedly. Language is a social weapon. Fowler was mostly trying to keep it from blowing up in people's hands.

Still, the people who read Fowler for pleasure are likely to be looking not for information but for the ratification of their own tastes:

> To say a French word in the middle of an English sentence exactly as it would be said by a Frenchman in a French sentence is a feat demanding an acrobatic mouth; the muscles have to be suddenly adjusted to a performance of a

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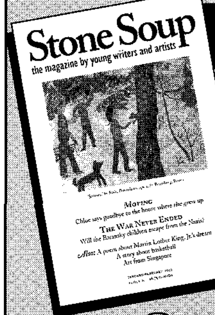

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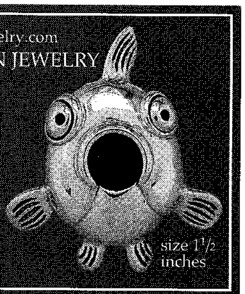

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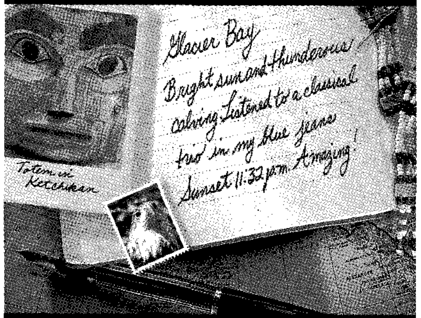
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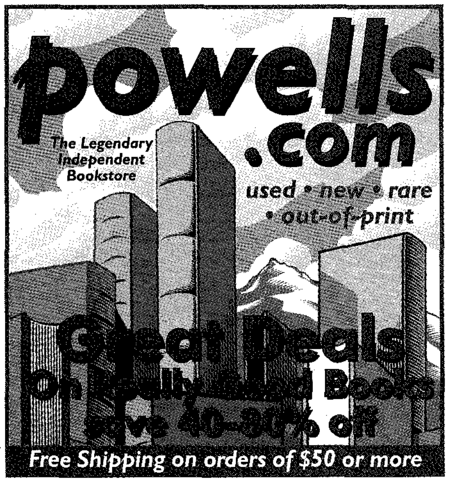
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> different nature, & after it as suddenly recalled to the normal state; it is a feat that should not be attempted; the greater its success as a *tour de force*, the greater its failure as a step in the conversational progress; for your collocutor, aware that he could not have done it himself, has his attention distracted whether he admires or is humiliated. All that is necessary is a polite acknowledgement of indebtedness to the French language indicated by some approach in some part of the word to the foreign sound.

Good advice for the next time you are having tea with the bishop, but it is also a confirmation of the conviction (so British) that more than a "polite acknowledgement" that the French have their own system of pronunciation must be a form of vulgar pretension. (It is characteristic of Fowler to have dropped a French phrase into the entry for readers to practice mouthing.) Fowler is explaining what speakers ought to do when they find themselves about to use a French word, and his advice is perfectly sensible. He is also sneering, just a little, at speakers who try to do more. In "Modern English Usage," the democratic impulse (let's stop showing off) and the élitist impulse (showing off is vulgar) are two sides of almost every coin, and this has something to do with the changing status of language during the period of the book's greatest popularity.

"Modern English Usage" came out in the same year, 1926, that the BBC established an Advisory Committee on Spoken English, for the purpose of providing radio announcers with guidance on pronunciation and diction. It was a panel of learned celebrities: Robert Bridges (the Poet Laureate), Julian Huxley, Kenneth Clark, C. T. Onions (one of the editors of the O.E.D.), and Alistair Cooke all served at various times. The chairman was George Bernard Shaw (whose own pronunciation happened to be Irish but who was, after all, the author of "Pygmalion"). It was the view of the director general of the BBC, Lord Reith, that "the higher a community climbs on the social scale, the greater the degree of uniformity in speech"; but the practical purpose of the committee was simply to eliminate regional dialects and accents among the announcers so that listeners would not develop antipathies based on social prejudice. An announcement delivered in a Liverpool accent might not carry much authority in London. The consequence was the creation of what was in some respects a new dialect: BBC English, the speech of educated professionals. Radio and television are great homogenizers of language. They make the regional seem not colorful and authentic but ignorant and illiterate. They teach everyone the same inflections. "Modern English Usage" belongs to this trend toward a single national standard, which is, despite the destruction of the local and idiosyncratic along the way, the democratic trend.

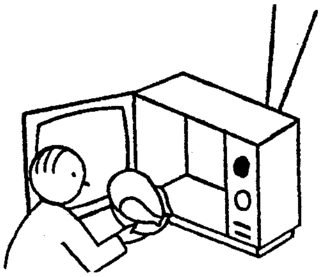
But language does not homogenize so easily—and this, too, is part of the significance of Fowler's book. In 1925, an Oxford student named Alan Ross noticed that certain speech habits were becoming markers of social class, and he began collecting examples. He published his results in 1954 as "Linguistic Class-Indicators in Present-Day English," an analysis famous for establishing the categories U (for upper class) and non-U. Ross's point was that in a society in which class differences are increasingly difficult to detect—in which breeding, wealth, and power are no longer necessarily overlapping categories—language becomes virtually the only indicator of social class. Ross thought that although the upper class had words and pronunciations peculiar to it, the main characteristic of U speech was the avoidance of non-U speech. And, as is clear from his lists of U and non-U usages, the main characteristic of non-U speech is the effort to sound, in fact, U. "They've a lovely home," for example, is pure non-U, because it is an attempt to be refined. Non-U speakers say "wealthy" and "ever so"; U speakers say "rich" and "very." Non-U speakers "recall"; U-speakers simply "remember."

Fowler's tastes ran in exactly this direction: he thought that writers give themselves away when they use a foreign word, or draw attention to a quaint locution, or prefer an elegant alternative to the common term. "Rarebit" is patently non-U: it is the consequence of a genteel avoidance of the common word "rabbit." Fowler would never have described his preferences as upper class; he lived frugally and had no social aspirations. But, even as he was trying to make the idiomatic mainstream accessible to everyone, he helped to sustain the feeling that knowing the right word and the correct pronunciation is the sign of a superior nature. There is a lot more satisfaction in getting those things right when you know that other people are getting them wrong. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Eva Moves the Furniture, *by Margot Livesey (Holt; $23).* What is extraordinary about this novel is the fretwork of feeling among its unorthodox cast of characters. Eva McEwen grows up engulfed by a vast and hopeful loneliness. She lives in a small Scottish town with her father and an overprotective aunt, her mother having died of the flu at her birth, in 1920. After Eva turns six, her solitary play is interrupted at unpredictable moments by a girl and a woman who, more than once, come to her aid. Only when she starts school does she realize that these two are invisible to everyone else—and, moreover, jealous of new acquaintances. At eighteen, Eva is desperate to escape the emotional tyrannies of her upbringing, but she eventually comes to feel the fullness of her love for both the real and the imaginary companions of her childhood. Livesey has written a ghost story, of sorts, minus the theremin music—like "Our Town," with its speakers from the grave—and, if it moves you, the end will send you back to the beginning again.

Churchill, *by Roy Jenkins (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $40).* Like his subject, the author is an English statesman—he has been a Member of Parliament and served as a Labour Cabinet minister—and this ample, absorbing life reflects an intimacy with the folkways of British politics that few biographies of Churchill can match. Jenkins shows us, at every point of Churchill's career, how he was viewed by colleagues, rivals, voters, and readers, and examines the issues that stirred or divided public feeling. When Churchill entered Parliament, in 1900, at the age of twenty-five, he was already famous as a soldier and war correspondent. He was brilliant and brash, and he compensated for his pushiness with superb oratory and very hard work. When he changed parties (Conservative to Liberal in 1904; Liberal to Conservative in 1924), he was welcomed by colleagues he had earlier opposed. Jenkins, who has written a biography of Gladstone, is fascinated by the ways in which politicians achieve power, use it, and lose it; his book serves as a road map to the changes in British government during the first half of the twentieth century. Although he treats his subject's blunders, such as the campaign against Indian self-government, without sympathy, he still concludes that Churchill was England's greatest Prime Minister.



Hoop Roots, *by John Edgar Wideman (Houghton Mifflin; $24).* With Michael Jordan's comeback making headlines, it's the season for old men and basketball. One of these men, the sixty-year-old novelist John Edgar Wideman, has written an engaging chronicle of his lifelong relationship with the game, touching on the cultural importance of basketball for African-American men; the relationship between professional sports and earlier entertainments such as minstrel shows; and his own years as a high-school and college player. Wideman has always been a powerful writer, but he has sometimes allowed the murkiness of his fictional imagination to get the best of him; here his goals may be more modest, but his observations are often on target.

Doctor Jazz, *by Hayden Carruth (Copper Canyon; $20).* "The magnitudes / always defeat me," Carruth writes in this book of poetry, his thirty-first. "But what / abundance! What plenitude!" An elegy for his daughter grounds the collection, along with powerful poems on the hardships of contemporary rural life, and yet Carruth remains great fun to read. He is as at home with the prison riots of Attica as he is with Odysseus or Jelly Roll Morton—he is the consummate poet of easeful learning and well-tuned orneriness. Perhaps this is why, at eighty, Carruth—unlike his great master, Frost—keeps getting better.

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THE THEATRE

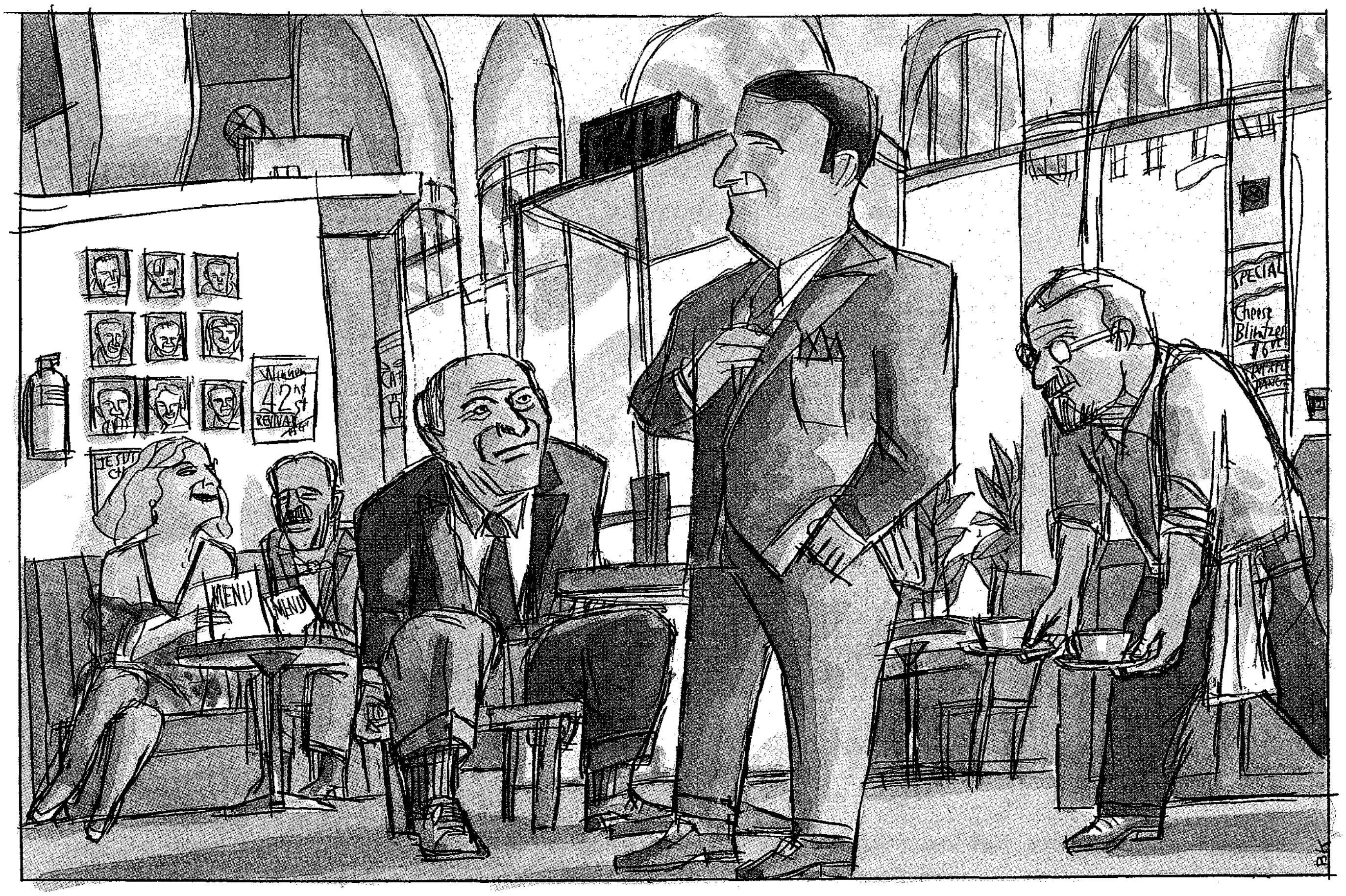
BORSCHT ON BROADWAY

Neil Simon's heaping platter of nostalgia.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

After finishing dinner the other night at the Cafe Edison, the legendary coffee shop in the Hotel Edison, on West Forty-seventh Street, I said to my waiter, "Have you seen—"

"The play?" he said. "I *am* the play!"



As Mickey Fox, a Jackie Mason-like comedian, Lewis J. Stadlen is an unstoppable Energizer Bunny of shtick.

BEN KATCHOR

The play in question is the new Neil Simon comedy, "45 Seconds from Broadway," now running at the Richard Rodgers, across the street (if you leave the hotel by its Forty-sixth Street door) from the coffee shop, which is where the play is set. Nicknamed the Polish Tea Room, in homage to the couple who run it and to the humble deli fare they have been serving there for two decades (it's also a class-conscious nod to the fancy-shmancy Russian Tea Room), the Cafe Edison is a place where the passing parade includes producers, playwrights, matinée ladies, actors, tourists, and young people who come to New York with dreams of theatrical glory. Simon's play is part love letter, part elegy to a Broadway that has nearly vanished. The Edison coffee shop isn't about to disappear, but it's the kind of local landmark that is easy to become sentimental about (like the typewriter-repair shop on the Upper West Side that recently closed for good, breaking the hearts of even those who have never used a manual typewriter); as Simon has said of the Cafe Edison, "When it goes, there will be nothing left like it."

Simon is in his element in "45 Seconds"—the air of this coffee shop is the same air that he breathed as a boy and as a young writer—but, like the fly that kept circling my bowl of borscht the other night, he approaches his subject without ever making real contact. His characters have tons of personality, in a sitcommy sort of way, but no life; they're merely scaffolding on which Simon hangs the bare minimum of flesh and blood and the maximum of gags. (For all the show's comedic flailing, the cleverest thing about it is its title, a nice twist on the title of a 1906 George M. Cohan show, "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway," which included a song that pretty well describes Simon's career arc: "I Want to Be a Popular Millionaire.") It is possible to make too much of such things, but articles about this play have noted that when Simon goes to the Cafe Edison he sits in a roped-off V.I.P. section (a hilarious touch, that—and a touch that didn't make it into the play), and it's hard not to feel that his imagination, and a large part of his heart, remain in that roped-off section with him. This production gives Simon's play the star treatment—it has a generous supply of top-drawer character actors, Jerry Zaks as its director, and a set by John Lee Beatty that replicates the original in a way that will make you beam in appreciation—and one would wish for no less for Simon, who has devoted a lifetime to entertaining us. (This is his thirty-second play.) But the humor in "45 Seconds from Broadway" is so superficial, and so stale—it's canned chicken soup, whose expiration date has long passed—that you wonder whether in the current climate the play will last forty-five seconds *on* Broadway.

Over the course of a year (one season to each scene), we meet the coffee shop's regulars, who are looked after by the owners, the warm, generous Bernie and Zelda (Louis Zorich and the touching Rebecca Schull). There is Mickey Fox (Lewis J. Stadlen), a loud, successful comedian and an unstoppable Energizer Bunny of shtick. Ordering for himself and for the British producer (Dennis Creaghan) who's trying to woo him to London, Mickey says to Bernie, "Give us each a peach cobbler. Cut it in half. He'll have the peach, I'll have the cobbler. Tell the cobbler not to make the shoes too tight." (Simon based Mickey on Jackie Mason, and he has perfectly captured the compulsiveness of Mason's wordplay.) There are two young hopefuls—a playwright from South Africa and a novice actress just in from Ohio. There are the inevitable laughable matinée ladies, and a strange, unsettling couple, reminiscent of Gloria Swanson and Erich von Stroheim in "Sunset Boulevard"—he is well dressed and mysteriously silent, and she is shabbily flamboyant and very vocal in her delusions of grandeur. (This character is used for laughs in a way that is embarrassingly cruel, but Marian Seldes is able to find a moment or two of genuine emotion in the role.) There is Mickey's brother Harry, who shows up (in the always welcome person of David Margulies) to ask a favor, and there is a black actress of a certain age who dispenses wisdom (I mention her only for the sake of completeness—it's a throwaway part).

Simon has the dynamics of the place right—in New York, you can have regular and close contact with people who remain virtual strangers and yet can change your life. But the experience of watching the play is hardly any different from the passive experience of sitting in a coffee shop, except that it costs more and you can't get a pastrami sandwich. In one telling scene, Mickey gives Solomon Mantutu, the young South African (Kevin Carroll), some advice about a play he has written. It's a double-barrelled lesson, about visceral truth ("What I try to do is hit them in the kishkas") and commercial success: "Well, I wouldn't arouse their conscience *too* much. There's people in the audience anxious to go home and have sex." Simon knows comedy, but he underestimates the audience, and so, instead of the pleasure of having your kishkas hit, you have a nagging sense of unfulfilled expectation—a sense that he is holding back some essential measure of his intelligence and talent. He leaves you wanting more—not when the play is over, as should be the case, but while you're still watching it.

Peter Parnell's play "QED," a more or less one-man show starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, which is at the Vivian Beaumont on Sunday and Monday nights through December 17th, takes its title from the theory for which Feynman won the 1965 Nobel Prize, quantum electrodynamics, not from the abbreviation of the Latin phrase—quod erat demonstrandum—that mathematicians use at the end of a proof to signify that they have worked it out successfully. But the play is itself a kind of proof, dramatically illustrating how a man who happens to be a genius elegantly and movingly works through the human problem of how to face the end of his life.

The play is set on a June day and night in 1986—two years before Feynman died, of cancer, at sixty-nine—and as it begins he is bursting into his office at Caltech, singing "There Is Nothing Like a Dame." C. P. Snow compared Feynman to Groucho Marx, and Alda, who originated the role earlier this year at the Mark Taper Forum, whence this production comes, under the direction of the Taper's artistic director, Gordon Davidson, conveys Feynman's Marxian sense of mischief and his penchant for puncturing false dignity wherever he found it. At one point, Alda, smiling that ingratiating, scrunchy-eyed smile of

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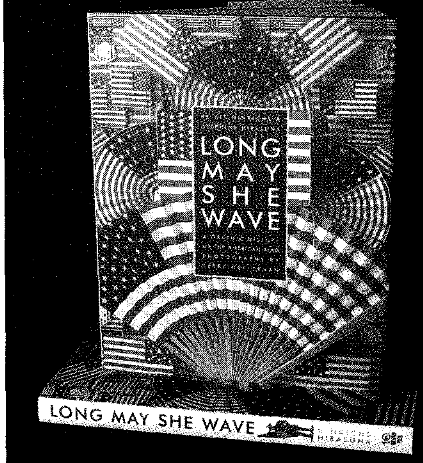

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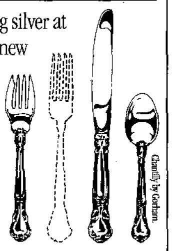
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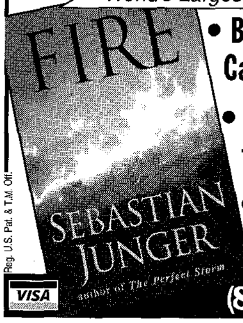

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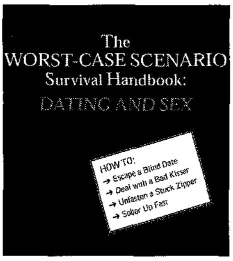

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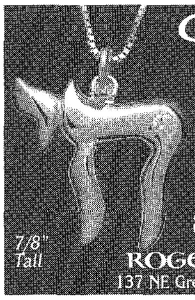

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his, says to the audience, "I don't like the official way of doing anything. I don't like clubs, either. Or prizes. I get this from my father, who was a uniform salesman. He'd say to me, 'You know what the difference is between a man with epaulettes and without epaulettes? *None! It's the same man!*' "

On this particular afternoon, Feynman is juggling a lot of balls: he is preparing a talk on "What We Know" for non-physicists; he is set to appear as the Chief of Bali Ha'i in a Caltech production of "South Pacific" that evening; his doctor has called him with some bad news about his cancer; his students have left endless requests on his answering machine; and he is wrangling with a fellow-member of the commission that investigated the Challenger explosion earlier in the year. Feynman is like a computer he describes in the play—a "connection machine." He says at one point that in order to understand something about the nature of light he imagined himself as a "darting photon." Both the character and the play have that quality—buzzing with life, they bounce around, shedding light on seemingly unrelated subjects, from Feynman's chances of surviving another operation to how the scientists working on the atomic bomb became so absorbed in the project that they lost sight of its implications.

Alda's Feynman is a man of utter charm, although a scene with one of his female students (Kellie Overbey) suggests, ever so glancingly, that there might be a whiff of something unsavory behind that charm. That only adds to the richness of the portrait, which no doubt is incomplete but has an imaginative fullness to it. Feynman was wary of being the subject of a biography, thinking that he'd be depicted, as James Gleick put it in his 1992 biography, "Genius," as a "bloodless intellectual" or a "bongo-playing clown." Well, he *was* a bongo-playing clown, but "QED" doesn't take the easy route of reducing Feynman to his zaniness. Its rhythms correspond to the way that people—even geniuses—approach and avoid highly emotional issues, and it portrays Feynman, with affection and awe, as someone who, to an extraordinary degree, lived out his belief that "everything is interesting if you look at it deeply enough." ♦

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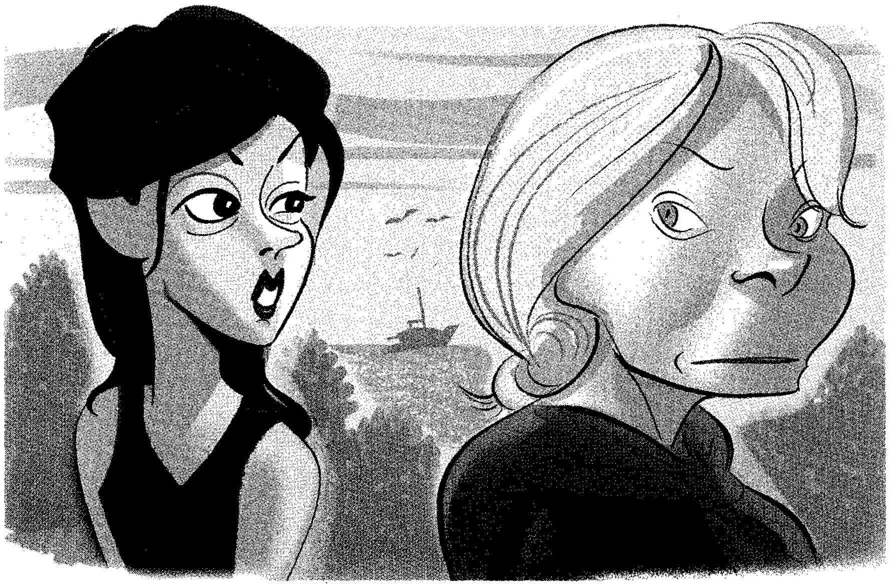
THE CURRENT CINEMA

ANGRY PEOPLE

Andre Dubus's Maine, and an Italian surgeon's Afghanistan.

BY DAVID DENBY



Marisa Tomei as the lover and Sissy Spacek as the mother in "In the Bedroom."

ERIC PALMA

The superb American independent film "In the Bedroom" begins with a young woman happily being chased by an even younger man through the tall grass of a New England hillside. As they embrace, the wind shakes the leaves in the trees. This sexual idyll is flourishing, we quickly learn, during the brief Maine summer in a coastal town, Camden, whose special scenes and tones we encounter in detail: the gray docks where the lobster boats unload; the handsome shop-lined main street in the afternoon and, again, in the middle of the night; the pleasant drone of a Red Sox game on a radio. This is the first feature movie directed by Todd Field, who is both an actor and a photographer, and he has a terrific talent, unusual in an American filmmaker, for stillness—moments, silently observed, saturated with an emotion not quite specified but ready to spill. Field achieves so convincing a picture of everyday normality that when violence breaks out one feels the same disbelief that one feels when it breaks out in life. Beneath the surface of the Maine summer, an elemental drama, cruel and increasingly ironic, unfolds with a logic that borders on the Sophoclean. The young man, Frank (Nick Stahl), who is supposed to go away to graduate school, has taken up with Natalie (Marisa Tomei), a local woman with two young sons. Natalie is separated from her husband, Richard (William Mapother), who is the kind of stupid, violent egotist who can't get a handle on adult life. A former high-school athlete, Richard, in his early thirties, is attractive to women—Mapother has light hair, a dark mustache, a bright smile—but after failing as a husband and father he refuses to leave his wife alone. Does he actually love Natalie and his little boys in some hapless way? Or does he merely claim power over them as an elementary male prerogative? (The answer may be "Both.") In any case, Natalie's young lover doesn't take Richard very seriously. Frank isn't dumb, but he's twenty-one years old, and a good-looking older woman adores him. He feels invulnerable.

"In the Bedroom" is based on Andre Dubus's compact and intriguingly elliptical 1980 short story "Killings," which Field and the screenwriter Rob Festinger have expanded and filled out. In both the

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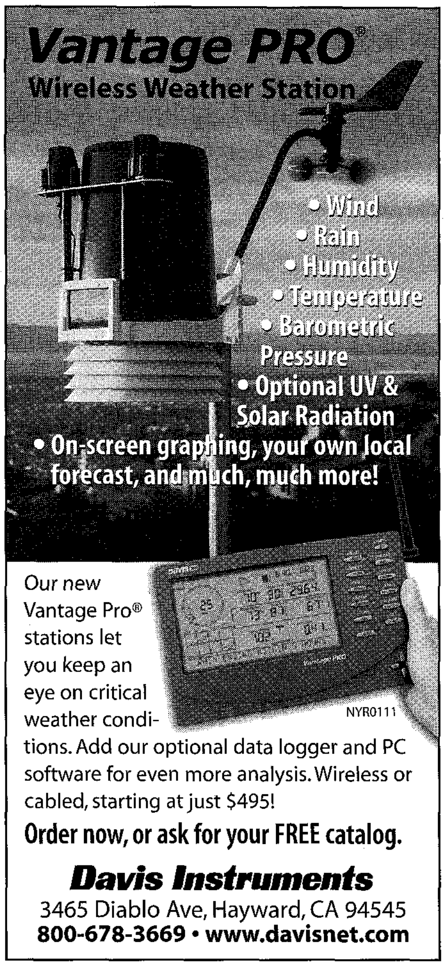
story and the film, the drama centers not on the lovers but on Frank's parents, Matt (Tom Wilkinson) and Ruth (Sissy Spacek) Fowler. A high-school music teacher of exquisite refinement, Ruth thinks the affair is wrong, and keeps telling Frank to get out of it. Her husband, Matt, a shrewd, easygoing doctor, takes a lighter view. He's proud of his son; he even feels a slight envy, which he retires by enjoying the affair vicariously. The argument between husband and wife hovers in the air, an unresolved difference widened by all the small irritations that accumulate in a long marriage.

The conversations seem to just flow out of family and neighborly life, and the whole movie breathes easily, without nailing every meaning down for us on the spot. Things like the Fowlers' attitudes toward one another or Matt's indifference to his medical work, with its suggestion of middle-aged drift, are firmly but lightly registered; the importance of Matt's male friendships, which we don't understand at first, slowly but steadily looms into a major development driving the story forward. Field's unforced intimacy with his actors allows one moment after another to bloom. Marisa Tomei, usually cast as a tough-talking big-city girl, brings a new softness and depth of feeling to Natalie, who's not too bright, not too articulate, and who perhaps feels a little guilty about having once fallen in love with a good-looking rotter. When her husband shows up at the house, she's frightened but also defiant. What do you do with an ungovernably violent man? Gradually, Field leads us to a series of explosions.

Richard kills young Frank, and the movie turns to the grief and recriminations of the older couple. Field's delicacy is remarkable: we get a deftly modulated elaboration of how people numb themselves with routine after extreme loss, how the friends gathering around the Fowlers offer both kindness and unconscious cruelty. In different ways, Ruth and Matt each withdraw. In "Carrie" or "Coal Miner's Daughter," Sissy Spacek's blue-eyed purity could seem either spooky or like goodness itself; now her concentration cuts into areas that she's never entered before—a subtle, rather acid rendition of the limits of a certain kind of advanced civilization. Ruth lacks sympathy for anything or anyone outside the boundaries of her perfect taste. A brilliant woman who cleans house too much, she indulges an icy politeness that disguises from others and even from herself how much anger she's suppressing. And Spacek matches up well with Tom Wilkinson, a burly British Shakespearean actor who has an ordinary man's bluff good sense and fellow-feeling. He disappears into the kindly New England doctor, briny Down East accent and all. The scene in which Matt and Ruth blame each other for Frank's death releases the wrathfulness the movie has been holding in reserve. It's both a personal and a visual shock—the camera, which has been quiet for so long, suddenly lurches after Wilkinson.

The Fowlers' misery is disproportionate to their sins, which are no greater than the mistakes made by good, intelligent people who aren't always conscious of the reasons they do things. The bitter irony of the movie is that these two highly evolved citizens are driven to consider vengeance as a way of stopping each from destroying the other. The story ends with a haunting uncertainty, and then Field pulls away from the town in a series of beautiful shots, at dawn, each taken from a greater distance, until the dreamy placidity of the Maine summer returns.

In the searing Italian-made documentary "Jung (War) in the Land of the Mujaheddin," Afghan men, women, and children living in the north, under the control of the Northern Alliance, address the camera without hesitation or artifice; they speak of their sufferings in a single extended block of words, with very little tonal variation or inflection. These Afghans have developed a genius for tirade, the art of defeated populations. "The people of Afghanistan have lived through so much suffering in this situation that they are exhausted now,"



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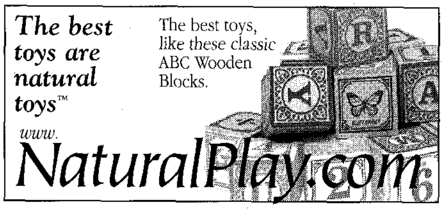

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one prematurely aged woman says. "Life itself has become a suffering for them. They want to die, but not even death wants the people of Afghanistan." A bearded man vows revenge as he holds two children whose limbs have been reduced to stumps by artillery fire. The men of fighting age talk of safeguarding their honor and of defending the land—eternal war is their only reality. It is the children who demand peace, as do the women, who go shopping in groups, draped in their pale-blue burkas, moving like pastel ghosts through the dusty towns. Indoors, for the camera, they reveal their faces: it seems they must continue to wear the burka in public, for if they did not, and the Taliban returned, someone might denounce them. At one point, the camera shoots a scene through the latticed face mask of a burka hood. It is like gazing through prison bars.

The movie, made by Fabrizio Lazzaretti, Alberto Vendemmiati, and Giuseppe Petitto, was shot in 1999 and 2000, during an earlier phase of the war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, and it documents the attempts of a Milanese surgeon, Gino Strada, to set up a hospital. Massive, bearded, and profane, the most persistent and humane hero to be seen in any recent movie, Strada rushes around the front with two companions, an implacable British nurse, Kate Rowlands, and a veteran Italian journalist, Ettore Mo, a chipper old man who prospers in the midst of disaster—Mo's gaiety is a kind of tinkling obbligato running through the first part of the movie. "Jung" ends with something like success: a ragged but functioning hospital is established. And amid the scenes of horribly wounded fighters and terrified children there are glimpses of the country's peculiar beauty—a jagged mountain range, a flash of sky and Biblical whirling dust, the abstract pattern of tank wheels spinning rapidly. There is the amazing handsomeness of the young fighters, too—not a moral fact but, inescapably, an aesthetic one. "Jung" is a film that cannot, in the normal sense of the word, be enjoyed, but it can be endured in a spirit of tempered anticipation: the dream of reconstruction awaits the end of Afghanistan's twenty-two-year war. The movie becomes an anguished demand that the dream be fulfilled. ◆

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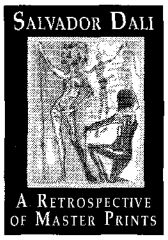

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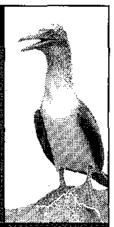

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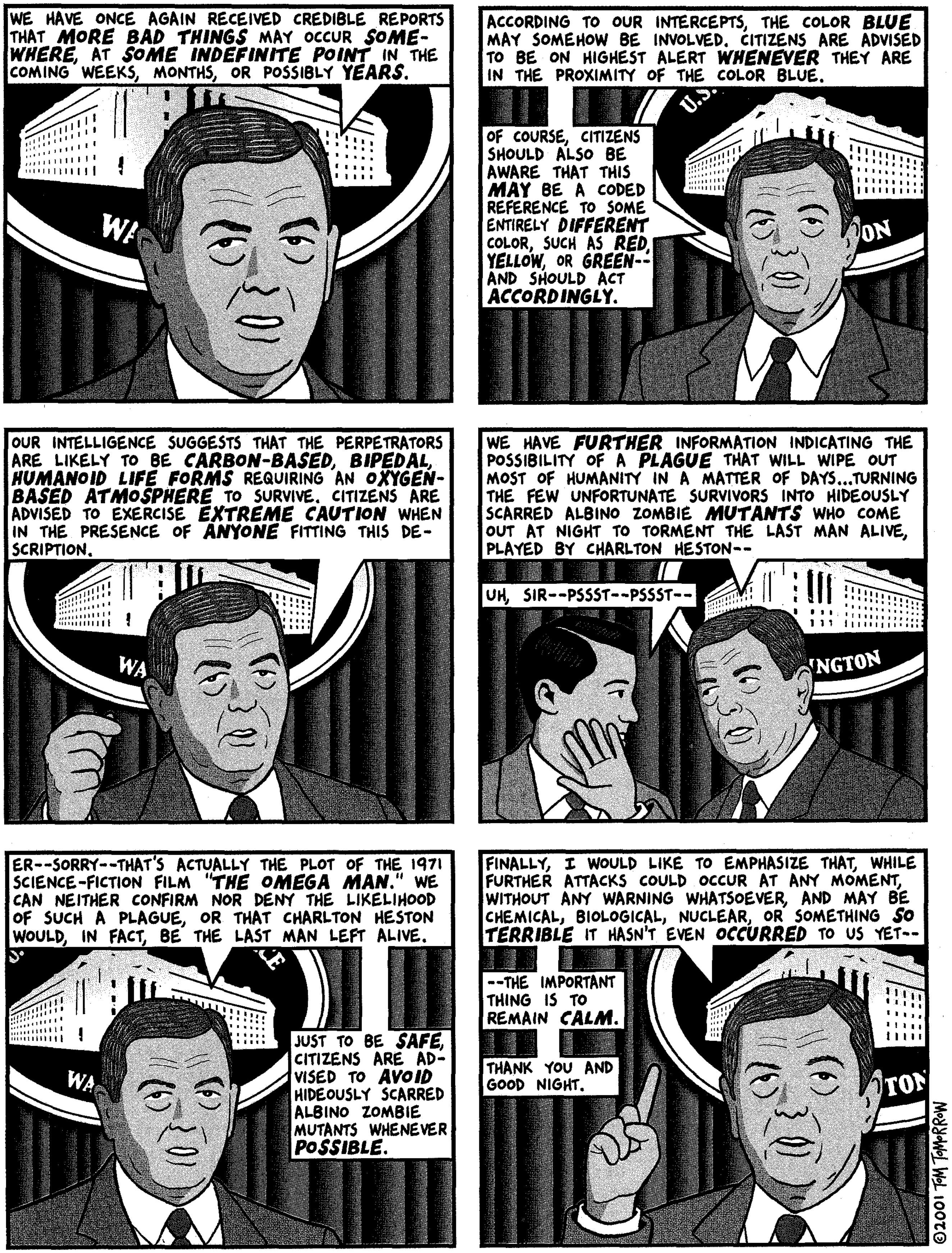
THE BACK PAGE BY TOM TOMORROW

AMERICA ON ALERT


WE HAVE ONCE AGAIN RECEIVED CREDIBLE REPORTS THAT MORE BAD THINGS MAY OCCUR SOMEWHERE, AT SOME INDEFINITE POINT IN THE COMING WEEKS, MONTHS, OR POSSIBLY YEARS.
WA
ACCORDING TO OUR INTERCEPTS, THE COLOR BLUE MAY SOMEHOW BE INVOLVED. CITIZENS ARE ADVISED TO BE ON HIGHEST ALERT WHENEVER THEY ARE IN THE PROXIMITY OF THE COLOR BLUE.
U.S.
ON
OF COURSE, CITIZENS SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE THAT THIS MAY BE A CODED REFERENCE TO SOME ENTIRELY DIFFERENT COLOR, SUCH AS RED, YELLOW, OR GREEN--AND SHOULD ACT ACCORDINGLY.
OUR INTELLIGENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE PERPETRATORS ARE LIKELY TO BE CARBON-BASED, BIPEDAL, HUMANOID LIFE FORMS REQUIRING AN OXYGEN-BASED ATMOSPHERE TO SURVIVE. CITIZENS ARE ADVISED TO EXERCISE EXTREME CAUTION WHEN IN THE PRESENCE OF ANYONE FITTING THIS DESCRIPTION.
WA
WE HAVE FURTHER INFORMATION INDICATING THE POSSIBILITY OF A PLAGUE THAT WILL WIPE OUT MOST OF HUMANITY IN A MATTER OF DAYS...TURNING THE FEW UNFORTUNATE SURVIVORS INTO HIDEOUSLY SCARRED ALBINO ZOMBIE MUTANTS WHO COME OUT AT NIGHT TO TORMENT THE LAST MAN ALIVE, PLAYED BY CHARLTON HESTON--
UH, SIR--PSSST--PSSST--
INGTON
ER--SORRY--THAT'S ACTUALLY THE PLOT OF THE 1971 SCIENCE-FICTION FILM "THE OMEGA MAN." WE CAN NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCH A PLAGUE, OR THAT CHARLTON HESTON WOULD, IN FACT, BE THE LAST MAN LEFT ALIVE.
WA
JUST TO BE SAFE, CITIZENS ARE ADVISED TO AVOID HIDEOUSLY SCARRED ALBINO ZOMBIE MUTANTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.
FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASIZE THAT, WHILE FURTHER ATTACKS COULD OCCUR AT ANY MOMENT, WITHOUT ANY WARNING WHATSOEVER, AND MAY BE CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, NUCLEAR, OR SOMETHING SO TERRIBLE IT HASN'T EVEN OCCURRED TO US YET--
--THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO REMAIN CALM.
THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT.
TON
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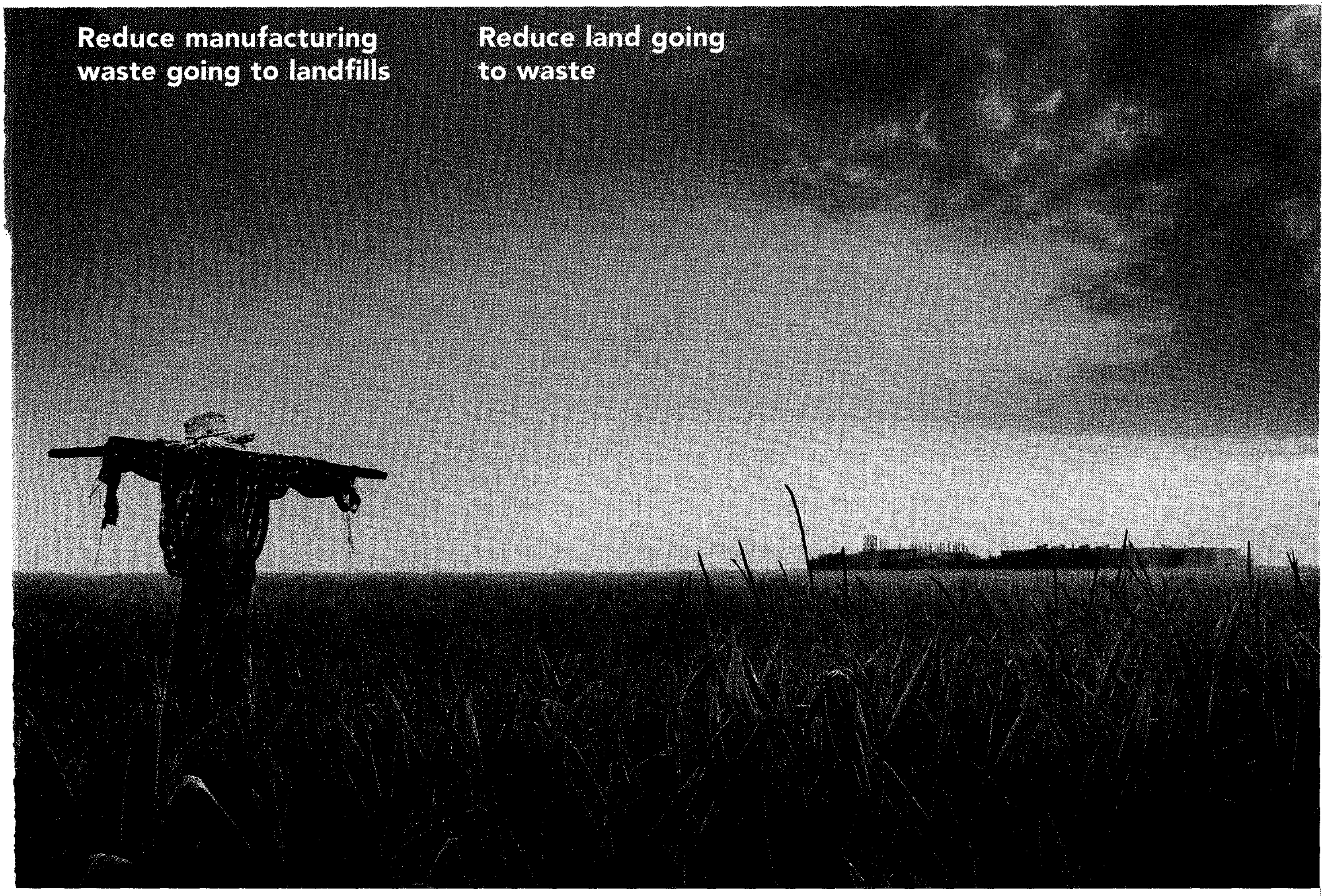
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